20-08-06

Rose-

There are various notations herein.

1/ Where words or text have been crossed out and replaced by hand **use the corrections**. Where there are notations suggesting changes but no actual changes - find a close by spot WITHIN the text and use (((adding whatever the notation says))) and then carry on with the text as it appears. This will give us both the original (with corrections replacing the original) and some notations about further possible changes.

2/ There are page numbers at bottom of each page - 1 through 475 and for some reason there is a duplication of 26 of which 26-A and 26-B appear to be contiguous. Finally after page 475, there is "Chapter 28" which begins anew with page 1 (through 28) - this is I think 476 (477?) onward.

3/ Do it in 10 or 11 point. Where there are " " marks around statements, verbiage, try to respect appropriate punctuation even if it does not appear here. For example, "She does not wish to do that". is incorrect and should be "She does not wish to do that." is correct. (note punctuation goes inside the quotation marks).

Happy manuscript typing!

Bob Cooper

PS - Yes - of course this is the ONLY Copy!

Bob

Porto-bello

Madeline and Tommy Coleman
a/ Possible sub-dedication to Bruce Willis (Parrot Cay)
Jack Albershardt (spelling?)
a/ John R. Albershardt (daughter is possibly Susan/Suzanne, Director of Films, State of Florida, Tallahassee): "The Provo Affair" Dunlap Int. Ltd; paperback, 340 pages; December 1991)
NARCS II /Drug Warriors by Robert Coram, Signet/New American Library 1989

Cast of characters & locations: (updated August 22/24, 2007)

Non Islands Support Cast:
AA pilot 417 - Captain Dudley
AA co-pilot - Yolando Barkley
Jessica Savitch
Peter Jennings

Diego de Avila (Mexican island - **rename** Revilla Gigedo)
Bill Conner - founder of WIV TV and radio - believed deceased
1/ Suzanna - ex wife (1979 era) + two children
2/ Winston Campbell (Canadian passport name)
a/ Comandante Fiero (Mexican soldier in charge of island) (Pedro Sanchez Fiero, XE4PF)
b/ Maria, maid-cook to Campbell

On Islands - white or employed by:
Club Med volleyball coach - Jean Jacque
Paul Robert Monasto - Italian, Karen's husband (38)
Karen Ellen Monasto - Ex-CBC news reporter (36)
a/ Anthony Monasto - 'oldest' (Tony)
b/ Camille Monasto - 8 years
c/ Bart Monasto - 5 years
(Possible older fourth child; perhaps by Paul and not Karen)
Polly (Paulette/Pauline) Conner - 'widow' of Bill Conner
a/ Lilac - cat (one of several)
b/ Arnold Touressant - gardiner (Miss Polly)
c/ Gabriel - office worker at travel agency
d/ Lannie - Haitian maid/house keeper (Lanny? decide **and correct**)
e/ Allen (former husband before Bill Conner)
1/ Insinuation there may have been other 'husbands'
f/ Neil Diamond (tapes)
g/ Greek origin porno video tapes
Jill Murphy - Jody Millspaugh (two daughters)
Ken Murphy - Jill's ex-husband (private pilot)
Patricia Pratt (nurse) -?
Averill duPont III (client of Polly)
Bob deNeuff (Russ Decoudres - real estate agent) (from 1972)
a/ Lisa (wife)

On Islands - black:
Patsy - immigration lady
Valentine Sratt - customs inspector
Mr. Swain - immigration airport boss, swagger stick
Gus/Gustave Cornelius Harvey (elder taxi driver)
  a/ Samuel Harvey (cousin from Nassau)
  b/ Lisa (wife)
  c/ Tom (son) + 2 children
    1/ Wife Jenny, works as head bookeeper for Avery
Sonya (sex worker employee of Polly; CG or Contact Girl)
Avery Watson Burgess (Art W. Butterfield) (56) (returned to Portobello 1972)
    1/ Island Fuel
    2/ Island Groceries
  3/ Jenny Harvey - daughter in law to Gus, head bookeeper for Avery
  a/ Velma (wife) - Jamaican trained nurse
  b/ Celia (daughter)
    1/ Married Barbados native - John
  c/ Alton - oldest son (24)
    1/ Daughter Rose - 6 years old from Alton US affair
  d/ Norman - youngest son (US Marines)
Rita Rigby (employee of Harvey on Portobello at telephone tap facility)
  a/ Studd Rigby (brother) (17 children; heavy equipment sriver for Burgess at dock)
  b/ 1st cousin to Minister Hardgraves
Linwold Astwood (NDP party chief Potobello) (**Ashwood** - correct)
  a/ 57 children claimed as father
  b/ "King of the world"
  c/ Freedom IV (his boat)
  d/ Suspect in GDT Philathelic building fire
DC (District Commissioner)
Plentiful (At end of 19 tapped lines in GDT)
  a/ 2345 (one of lines into Plentiful's home)
Benjamin Dornfield (newspaper publisher - Island Times) (Turks & Caicos Island Gazette?)
  a/ Nassau Guardian
  b/ Todd - son
  c/ Bill Dodd - name used by Dornfield when telephoning Internal Telephone Security Devices concerning exchange synthesizer
Manuel (Manny) Morgan (GDP pretender, confidant of Dornfield)
Honourable Orville (Burnside?) Smythe (CM)
  a/ Grand Democratic Party (GDP)
Honourable William Stanfield (Minister of education) (Check for **StanDfield** as error)
  a/ Most educated of ministers - banking field
Honourable Stanley Hardgraves (Minister of transport)(Check for Har**gr**aves as error)
  a/ Fisherman from Middle Caicos
National Democratic Party (NDP)
National Democatic Coalition (**NDC** - rename above in early book)
  a/ Nat Simpson, former CM
Jack (GDT taxi driver - Haitian)
CM Nat Simpson - caught in US DEA snare set up by Governor Clapton
Executive Council (elected and appointed ministers of the sitting government)

a/ Legislative chambers (GDT)

Provo/GDT Businesses/locations:
WIV (West Indies Video)
a/ FM radio station(s)
1/ Robert Manchester, US born black GM
b/ Cable TV service
(TCNA - Turks & Caicos National Airline)
a/ Islander (aircraft)
b/ James Plasset (ground manager GDT)
(Ramada Resort and Casino)
(Le Club - Club Med)
a/ G.O. (Gentile Organiser)
(The Erebus)
a/ Susie Turn - road leading to Turtle Cove past Erebus
Turtle Cove (area)
The Bight (native area between Turtle Cove and Grace Bay)
(Sheraton Hotel - under construction, near Golden Shores)
(Hey Jose - Mexican restaurant)
(Grace Bay Nursery - Portobello advertiser on WIV-FM)
South Dock (Portobello ship wharf)
Five Cays (native village, south shore, Portobello)
a/ Haitian tenement housing
(Gilley's Cafe - airport, Portobello)
a/ Polly Girl beer
Kitina (GDT restaurant/hotel)
Dora's Airport Restaurant (GDT)
(Marshfield house - on beach)
(Yinger (rename) (house)
1/ Bradley Yinger - rename **Peyton Chennault**
(David and PetulaWhitebourn house) (very early ex-pat residents - Doc and Peggy Whithy)
Timothy Klungess (Provo ex-pat; Norwegien - Tor Klinenberg)
(Catholic Church Provo - part of Archdiosese from Bahamas)
a/ Father Mc~~Clasky~~ Catholic Priest (change name) McMartin
Father O'Malley (Catholic church of Paul's youth)
(Anglican Church - across road on Leeward highway near town)
(Blue Hills Govt. Clinic)
Blue Hills Baptist Church (site of GDP meetings)
a/ Cornelius Ewing (Member GDP Parliament, Portobello/Blue Hills)
(Golden Shores - resort owned by Burgess)
a/ On land purchased from the Crown when original owner did not refile for in in 1962
b/ Golden Shore Condominiums
(Grace Bay)
1967 (white man landed on Portobello)
Gray Hills Aviation (charter firm Portobello)
Portobello Health Medical Centre (PHMC)
a/ Dr Habiss
b/ Abdon St.Pierre (Haitian injured in vehicle accident)
c/ Dr Ericcson (male)

Portobello Police Department
a/ Sargeant Baptiste
b/ Lieutenent Lasarde (hurt in crash)
c/ Officer Jones (hurt in crash)
d/ Arnold Watson, Police Chief
Grand Turk Police Department
1/ back salina streets
a/ Lt. Prattle (officer of day)
b/ Corporal Pratt (duty officer at airport)
c/ Corporal McVey (2nd at airport) (Sent to South Caicos to airport) (injured trying to apprehend Lawrence Harvey)
South Caicos
a/ Cockburn Harbour
(Sandy Point - North Caicos)
(Kew - North Caicos Garden spot)
BWI Trading (original Portobello store; competitor to Burgess Island Groceries)
Fast Eddie's Restaurant
TTT/Third Turtle Inn (3T)
Central Square Complex
a/ Stop 'n Shop Market (Leeward highway)
b/ Dornfield office in same building
c/ David Whitebourn - building owner
(?) Marshfield (Buzzy)
a/ Roxanne - wife
Herbert MacPherson (attorney representing Pauline Conner; formerly Charles Scott)
Morgan & Stenbeck (law firm renting from Avery)
a/ Richard Mayfield (attorney)
b/ Roland Martin (TCI's first native attorney; GDT office)
1/ Brother of Manuel Morgan, politician
Dick Clark (as himself)
Charles Scott (Lawyer - Clare Skatfeld) (Bill Conner's attorney)
Joshua Foxworth (Reuters reporter; UN - died 1988)
a/ Nancy (wife)
b/ Independent Portobello - 1985
Dr David and Susie McClaskey - from USA - he Olympic class swim coavh University of Michigan
Shawn Kenny (GDR Barrister/lawyer)
...
Luscious Lane (Real estate but part of Larry Harvey telephone tapping empire)
a/ James Lane (husband, an architect for many government projects) (38+)
b/ Christine Keeler (mentioned witg reference to British government sex scandal)
Sindy Wicker (island gossip, Fax news letter; Sally Ward)
a/ Denver (David - husband)
Alan Pennault (Art Pickering - **change name**)(Diving boat/fishing operator Portobello)
Neville Holton (Insurance man Portobello) (correct earlier name)
Anthony Belston (Scotia Bank GDT)
Chad Johnson (Barclays GDT)
DeSoto (Barclays Portobello)
'Laing, Buttonwood, Cooper, Jackson' - names on list of 19 tapped phones in GDT

Governor Martin Burnside - present British appointed Governor
a/ Mindy (wife) (correct where MindAy) (20 years younger than Martin)
b/ John (son - aged ?)
1/ National Security (issue)
a/ 2777 (Guv's hot phone)
b/ Former AG in British Virgin Islands (trained attorney)
c/ Waterloo - official residence of Governor (GDT)
d/ (for) 'The Queen'
e/ Andrew Jackson (Jack - pilot for government plane)
f/ Althea (Waterloo cook)
Attorney General Jeremy McTabbish (41) (Irish lawyer)
Chief Secretary Livingston Thatcher (45, gay)
Robin Lewster (Head of C & W in TCI)
a/ John Brown, engineer from C&W London
b/ Reggie Seybold, allegedly a C&W London engineer but in fact an attorney for C&W
Terry Clapton - Governor preceding Burnside
...
<u>Polly's Guests - Christmas</u>
1 — Jim Jackson (Oklahoma) (Oil)
a/ Wanda (wife)
b/ Shawn (son 17 years) (University of Maryland)
2 — Rodney Paul (vehicle distributor)
a/ Maryanne (wife)
3 — Bill Thorp (Professor Economics University of Arkansas)
a/ Julian (wife)
4 — Stanton Wigh Third (West Texas oil)
a/ Trudy Wigh (ex airline hostess)
...
Governor Williams - Brit of 1977
Whitehall
a/ Commonwealth Foreign Office

Book 2/ 8-25-90

Chapter One:

Pan American's flight 417 from Florida moved swiftly off Portobello's ~~only~~ single runway as the captain ~~asked the~~ requested tower ~~for~~ instructions ~~on~~ for parking his Miami originating plane. Captain Dudley detested the Saturday 90 minute trip from Miami and he especially disliked being here late in December. His plane was 100 percent full; ~~filled~~ with the usual mixture of macho yuppie males and scantily clad 20'ish ~~horny~~ anxious females bound for a week at Club Med's very popular Portobello facility. He smiled recalling how his young co-pilot, Yolando Barkley, described the Club Med facility after a week's stay there in November. One sentence stuck in his mid 50's' mind; "On the island they call Club Med Porno-bello and they emphasize porno" Yolando had said with a face wide smile. ~~reported~~. Dudley had been telling himself he was too old to engage in ~~free~~ free ~~wheeling~~ form sexual activities anymore, ~~and he rationalized that~~ rationalizing the AIDS ~~crisis~~ threat was as good a reason as any to give up chasing tail. But try as he might, he couldn't shake that nightly longing in his groin for the lifestyle he ~~had given up~~ voluntarily walked from five years ~~ago~~. prior.

A lyrical female voice interrupted his smile as the air traffic controller suggested the Pan Am plane "find a place just south of the DC8 charter next to the inward bound immigration doors". That was one of the other reasons he hated Saturdays at Portobello. The airport had been designed by the British to accomodate one or at most two 100-seat airplanes at a time. His 727 was going to squeeze in between a 727 charter and two DC8 charters; and then the real fun ~~began~~ would begin. Just the month before, another Pan Am pilot had lost a wing tip to a ~~freewheeling~~ cartoon private plane after ~~the~~ it's

~~private~~ pilot had become confused by the lack of clear tower instructions and tried to turn out of the parking ramp before he was clear to move. Portobello had no repair or maintenance facilities and the hapless Pan Am flight ~~had sat~~ was forced to sit on the apron for ~~more than~~ 14 hours while New York rounded up parts, a mechanic and an FAA inspector to rescue the plane. Pam Am execs had made their pilot share the blame for the loss even though he was stationary and defenseless when the accident happened. As might be expected, every company pilot now landing at Portobello was worried about his own career when they ~~sat down~~ landed here.

The good news was that he was protected as best he could be by the DC8 and the edge of the paved runway. ~~The bad news was that~~ On the other hand, although in theory Pan Am, ~~as the only scheduled~~ is scheduled service ~~to Portobello,~~ had priority with baggage handling and customs personnel, the other 727 ~~had barely begun~~ charter was now starting to unload and ~~his flight~~ Pan Am flight 417 would not get the attention of the baggage people until they completed the ~~727~~ charter. It looked like another late arrival back in Miami; ~~and~~ his superior would call him on the carpet for not being more aggressive ~~on~~ in Portobello.

"Yolando, think I'll pop out there to see if I can speed up baggage" he sighed, sliding out of the well-worn pilot's seat. Yolando looked disappointed but gave him the thumbs up gesture. She had hoped she would be allowed to deplane herself, having made numerous friends at Club Med while there. She ~~had~~ was fantasizing ~~fantasized~~ she might get a few minutes alone with the Club's French volleyball coach, Jean Jacque. If they had five minutes ~~together~~ in even a semi-(dark) private corner of the airport, she'd ~~smile~~ glow all the way back to Miami. Alas, not this Saturday.

"Captain, when will I get my knife back?". A short man in his 70s was

standing between Captain Dudley and the rusting ramp ~~stairwell~~. A dark haired lady and three children were clustered about the man. Damp, ~~cold~~ cool northwesterlies were blowing in their faces. It wasn't supposed to be this chilly at Portobello. ~~They~~ said the skies ~~would~~ clear soon. ~~(Account)~~

"We took a knife from you?" he said, managing his best public relations smile.

"Back in Miami, at the X-Ray thing; they told me I could reclaim the knife when I got here."

Dudley imagined the man to be Italian in descent although the lady and children didn't look Italian. The fellows black hair was long and straggly and thinning fast. Dudley mused he could enter a Sonny Bono look alike contest and win. ~~He~~ turned to look for his chief steward and then, remembering the baggage handling problem, turned back to the passenger.

"Give me your name and I'll see if we have it on board. Go on into immigration and we'll find you there." He knew he was lying; he had gone into immigration once on a Saturday and vowed never to ~~enter~~ the tin sided and roofed building again ~~on a Saturday~~. With four planes on the ground at the same time, he knew he didn't want to be in the ~~busy~~ facility with 800 people all trying to locate their baggage and shove through immigration and customs.

"Paul Monasto. We are from Toronto and we thank you." With that Captain Dudley tipped his hat and disppeared down the shakey ~~stairwell~~ to ~~chase down~~ the airport manager.

"Alright children, head-on down the stairs" instructed dark-haired Karen Monasto. The children giggled and jumped stair step to stair step as Karen slide her arms around Paul's thin waist, and whispered ~~in~~ his ear;

we're finally here

"This is it; we are here. God give us the strength to deal with what's ahead". Paul kissed her forehead just above the eyebrows and muttered an almost inaudible, "A-men". Karen smiled briefly and then turned to face her husband. "I think they say a-MON here!". Like two teenagers sharing a private joke they broke into laughter, and holding hands, followed the children across the terrace into immigration.

~~Not This Saturday,~~

Portobello's immigration and customs hall was even worse than Captain Dudley's memory. On this particular Saturday, just prior to Christmas, every available hotel room would be filled by dusk. Worse than that, because the smaller, private hotels were operated by greedy, non-trusting owner-operators, each had overbooked his facility by at least 20% for the holiday period, ~~They~~ justifying justified this approach because they claimed some people never bother to cancel their reservations. No hotel owner wants even a single empty bed any night and especially not between Christmas and New Years on the island. So, every year, and growing worse each year, there were as many as 200 people stranded with no empty beds on the island after the last Saturday flights had come and gone. Locals understood that was the way it was; the tourists, waving guaranteed reservation slips and screaming they had prepaid a 50% deposit never did understand. Those who would get their rooms, those who would not shared the same crowded hall, unaware of what was about to happen.

Feeling - over crowded, hot, = people - did this

It hadn't always been this bad.

Portobello had enjoyed such popularity only a few brief years. The "grand" 1990 opening of the Ramada Resort and Casino had been widely perceived to be the death knell for the smaller, private, and mostly older hotels. Club Med had been in operation some six years before the Ramada opened; it had become the most popular western hemisphere 'Le Club' within two years of opening. The locals ~~said this was because~~ smirked 'Club Porno' catered largely to swinging singles with sex on the menu 24 hours a day. That's why it was a success. Club Med denied

the allegations but not very loudly because they didn't want to slow down the steady stream of wanton guests pouring largely out of the New York City marketplace.

"Mommy...what are those people doing?" Camille Monasto was 8 years old, going on 18. She had grown up from birth with access to a steady diet of R and X rated films her mom and dad brought home from the neighborhood video rental shops. In a narrow recess along the wall in the terribly overcrowded immigrations hall, where two tourists likely headed for Club Porno, who, in their excitement, had found there, they couldn't wait another minute. Barely ten feet from the Monasto family, others in the stylish lines pretended they didn't notice, the mid-thigh length skirt of a blonde was wrapped around her stomach. And the rapidly dropping designer jeans of her male companion, back to the Monastos, exposing his snowy white cheeks. (If they're that close, Camille sentence like - is that a rose painted on his butt?)

"Look over here Camille!" Karen ordered, placing the palm of her hand across her daughter's face.

"Jesus Christ," wrenched Paul as he stared at the couple vibrating against the walls; "That son-of-a-bitch doesn't wear underpants!"

"And if he does that tomorrow on the beach, those white cheeks will be rosey red," snickered Karen. With her free hand she reached for Paul's still gyrating hand or arm. Italians always punctuated their statements with their hands and her Paul was.

The line moved very slowly. The people ahead of the Monasto family looked strangely out of place. Their clothing set them apart from the typical tourists and Karen decided they looked like regular residents of Portobello; at least the lady did. The immigration checker, a young black woman, Karen judged to be in her early 20s, seemed to recognize the lady. Karen wondered why the couple were in this line, since returning residents

had a line of their own.

"Welcome home, Mrs. Conner," Karen heard the immigration officer say. She couldn't hear the response because the lady spoke very softly. Karen strained to hear the conversation since she recognized the Conner name. When she and Paul had first visited Portobello three months earlier, (looking for a new direction in their lives,) they had heard many of the locals refer to Mrs. Conner. She tried to remember what she heard, and then turned to whisper to Paul.

"Do you remember when we were here and people talked about a Mrs. Conner?"

"Yeh, I guess so. Oh yeah, she's the old broad everyone seemed to be afraid of ... doesn't she own the radio and TV here?".

It all came back to Karen. Mrs. Conner was not an old broad, unless you considered 45 old. She had been a widow for two years. Her husband had moved to Portobello in the 1970s. and built the country's first television and radio broadcasting services. Karen made a special note of her name because at home in Canada, Karen had once been described as 'Jessica Savch' or even Peter Jennings. Before she and Paul started producing children, Karen had been first a radio and then a television journalist. Karen had a natural talent for this work.

"Next please". The immigration checker was beckoning to Karen. Mrs. Conner and her gentleman friend were disappearing around the half wall that separated immigration from customs.

Karen handed over five passports and five entry forms. She was used to managing the family's affairs. Paul had no head for paperwork or figures. But he was a talented woodworker and together they were a team.

"You moving here?" asked the slightly puzzled immigration

while she studied the forms.

lady. Before Karen could answer the immigration official was waiving her hand for attention. A ~~manly~~ Short, stocky black male, (in green uniform) ~~who walked~~ with a British swagger stick dangling from a loop on his wrist, marched rather smartly to their immigration stand.

"~~Your~~ Problem?" he asked. Only it didn't sound like a question, more like a challenge.

The badge on the uniform of the immigration lady said her name was Patsy. And Patsy explained that she had a family of, and she counted with her finger, "1,2,3,4 and 5" pointing at Paul last, who were immigrating.

"Bad day to immigrate," was the response. He had decorative braid on both shoulders which, Karen ~~knew~~ suspected, ~~meant~~ announced they were dealing with Portobello's head of immigration. His eyes studied the family carefully as he fingered the papers handed over by Patsy. "Two weeks, ~~[illegible]~~ come to my office after ~~the~~ holidays and we'll discuss this." And he tossed the papers and passports back onto Patsy's stand, struck his leg with his swagger stick and turned heel.

"Is there some problem?" Karen ~~[illegible]~~ trying to control the shakiness in her voice. ~~asked with all of the confidence she could muster~~ asked. But Before Patsy could answer, Karen ~~started to tell~~ began to blurt her life story, how she and Paul had come to Portobello three months earlier on holiday, had fallen in love with the island, and had returned to Canada to sell everything they owned so they could ~~come~~ return here to live. Patsy listened, waiting for Karen to draw a breath so she could jump in. Patsy had been trained to let people talk, especially when they seemed ~~to be~~ nervous. It was ~~one way~~ a way, she knew, to get people to tell you things they might otherwise surpress.

"No problem" Patsy smiled. "~~This is the busiest time of our year and as~~ Xmas always busy This not day to do this, as you see.

People moving here are different — special rules.

~~you can see, today is especially bad. We have special requirements for those who are here for longer than a 30-day stay and this is not the time or place to deal with those requirements. I'll do as Mr. Swain said and admit you for two weeks."~~

Mr. Swain say two weeks," She stamped the forms, "two weeks

With this, Paul's face began to turn red, indicating he was losing his control.

He leaned over Patsy's stand, & spat, putting his face very close to hers ~~, Paul was losing his control~~. "Look, we filed all of the papers and had our medical tests when we came three months ago. What's this two week business?" ~~Karen was near tears and Paul could tell~~. "We sold everything we had to be here...," she started, Karen's trailed off, ~~voice starting~~ stammered & she rubbed her eyes

"~~There is~~ NO problem," repeated Patsy, handing back the passports with the Turks and Caicos entry stamp now inked on each. "~~But our main~~ office is closed ~~month~~ now for holiday~~s, so you can't go in as Mr. Swain requires until after January third~~. Next!".

Karen took a deep breath and herded the three children ~~in front of~~ before her towards the customs area. Paul ~~was staring~~ took one more glance at the couple still pinned to the corrugated metal wall ~~when~~ until Karen grabbed his shirt sleeve and yanked.

~~But~~ In the immigration area, the seven lines had been fairly orderly if slow. The customs portion of the building was total ~~chaos~~ disarray. Baggage was unloaded from the plane into the the ~~backs~~ rubbing beds of old pickup trucks. Overloaded, the bags and boxes slowly moved in lurches and leaps from under the belly of the plane to a hole cut into the corrugated steel wall for passage inside the terminal building. Perhaps ten bags, side by side, could stack up in the opening at a time. Today there would be more than 2,000 pieces of ~~luggage~~ bags.

In a real airport, different flights have separate luggage arrival areas. At Portobello, four flights were now emptying their bags into the same 15 foot wide slot. ~~Some of the~~ From experience, the locals traveling that day knew that baggage had to be moved away from the opening or no more would come inside. So

they pitched in and formed a baggage brigade to pass baggage hand over hand away from the hole. At the end of the relay line bags were tossed into a rapidly growing pile. Into that pile tourists dug to rescue their (personal) luggage before several thousand pounds of dead weight destroyed the it beyond recognition. Karen and Paul had witnessed it all three months ago, but nothing compared with this holiday chaos.

Five-year-old Bart knew his baggage by sight. But More importantly, Bart knew the heavily strapped cardboard box that contained the Christmas presents carefully packed in Toronto.

"Mommy, mommy!" cried the youngest Monasto "There's our Christmas!" Karen's hand went to her mouth, her heart to her throat. There, at the bottom of the huge pile of baggage and boxes was the Christmas box. Paul's just as Karen let out a gasp. They had promised themselves that no matter what the kids would have a memorable Christmas. Uprooting them from school, selling all of their cherished belongings and taking them away from family and friends had been traumatic. Now, under several thousand pounds of strewn luggage their Christmas box was collapsed to less than half its original height.

Paul saw red. Every ounce of guilt he carried for leading his family to this distant Caribbean island focused on the crushed Christmas box. He dove, as if possessed, kicking and shoving bags and boxes out of the way, struggling to grasp the elusive thread of continuity to their past. Bart, Camille and the eldest child Anthony, their shining with excitement & fear, screamed encouragement at their father.

Within seconds virtually everyone in the metal walled hall froze in their tracks. Mouths hung open on unfinished sentences,

Necks craned to see what was happening and then sudenly even the children's screams stopped and Paul's exalted voice floated up from the bottom of the luggage pile. It was the only sound in the hall and everyone heard him shout, "Yes Bart, there is a Santa Claus!".

For brief seconds there was total silence in the jam packed hall, and then far away in a corner somebody began clapping. Instantly everyone joined in as Paul extricated himself from the pile holding above his head the crushed remains of Christmas 1990, smiling and jubilant.

It would turn out that retrieving the Christmas box was the easiest aspect of clearing customs that day. It would be another 90 minutes before the Monasto family had seven bags and four boxes in one pile ready for the mandatory Customs inspection. Tired, with sweat, and nearly at the end of the long line, the family inched its way slowly towards the Custom's inspector. After processing some 800 people ahead of the Monastos, the Customs personnel were working well into overtime and they had long ago lost interest in prying through people's baggage.

"Customs Form?" asked the frazzled young man. His name tag said he was Valentine Sratt. Karen handed over the long and carefully prepared list. She had calculated they would pay nearly $900 in duty that day and the money had been separated into a zippered section of her purse.

"Christmas presents?" asked Valentine. Young Bart spoke up first.

"My daddy saved our Christmas presents from the big pile!" he announced proudly. Valentine looked at the lad, then the crumpled box in front of him, and then slowly looked at Paul. He smiled, slightly at first and then he

broke into a wide grin.

"No duty!" he said, stamping the card with a pass mark. "Merry Christmas... Happy New Year!" He motioned for them to pass and closed down his Customs' booth. For ~~him~~ Valerie, it was finally all over for another year.

Karen and the children stood still, not certain what to do next. ~~Her fingers~~ She nervously fingered the 9 crisp $100 bills in her purse and she opened her mouth to speak at the retreating Valentine Bratt.

Paul shot his fingers across her lips to silence the words and said in a very loud voice "Alright kids, let's go find Santa Claus!" ~~Two~~ A few minutes later, after two trips each, the Monastos were standing around their ~~seven bags and four boxes~~ piled in in the bright Caribbean sunshine. All around them hundreds of people were loading into buses and the island's delapidated ten-year-old cars that doubled as cabs on a busy day. Paul and Karen searched the sea of salt and pepper faces for Jill Murphy; the lady who had ~~arranged for them against all odds a rental home~~ miraculously found them a rental home during the busiest season of the year. But Jill Murphy was not to be seen.

Paul did see a familiar face; a cab driver who had befriended he and Karen three months prior. "Gus...Gus!" Paul shouted. A black man in his late 60s or early 70s, Paul could not decide ~~his age~~ for certain, turned and saw Paul waving. "You come back!" the man exclaimed. "I tell you come back and now you here!", Paul explained their situation; Jill Murphy was to meet them and take them to their rental home. ~~She was also to have gone grocery shopping~~ She had promised to do grocery shopping for them since the stores would be closed, perhaps until after Christmas. But where was Jill?

"I saw her early" Gus recalled, pausing all this over, scratching his graying head. "I think she picked up some people and ~~left~~ drove".

Karen approached Gus and Paul. "Paul, if Gus thinks she has come and ~~left~~ gone, maybe we should hire Gus to take us". Gus beamed as the prospect of a sizeable fare, ~~Paul turned to face Karen~~ turning to face Karen & placing ~~, placed~~ his hands on her shoulders, Paul said ~~and spoke~~. "That's a good idea Hon, but where do we go? Only Jill knows which house she has rented for us, Where do we ask Gus to take us?"

"No problem, mon" beamed Gus. "~~Let's go~~ We find Jill!".

...

Gus's taxi was a legend on Portobello. Gus was a larger legend. In 1967 Gus owned the first car on the island. Before that time, the 23 mile long island had no roads. Three native villages, connected only by footpaths, were much as they ~~were~~ had been in 1867. The Turks and Caicos Islands had somehow escaped the march of time, World Wars One and Two and everything thereafter. Then one day an well-known American ~~real estate developer~~ industrialist with a famous ~~family~~ name had flown over the virtually deserted horseshoe shaped island and marked it on his map. ~~He was busy~~ It was busy at the time ~~he was laying out a development~~ in the Bahamas developing another 'out' island, but he knew one day he would return to explore this place.

When the Americans finally negotiated the rights to develop Portobello they had sent a small force of men and equipment to the island by barge from the east coast of Florida. Gus remembered the day they landed. He remembered it well because by dusk he had earned an American dollar in return for helping them unload two World War Two LST landing barges filled with supplies and equipment. It had been the first American dollar he had ever possessed and if the truth were known, the first money he had ever been paid for work in his then 44 years.

Gus knew about Americans. Even without electricity, roads and radios,

everyone on Portobello knew about Americans. They were all rich, they all drove cars, they all lived in houses with electricity. And in 1967 Gus was on his way to being just like an American. Gus had his first American dollar.

Gus awoke by 5 AM every morning. He needed no clock to tell him what time it was; time was not important. You got up when the sun came up, or before. You went to bed when the sun went down, except on Wednesday and Sunday. On those two nights you went to church. By 1967 Gus was pre-elder in his village Baptist Church. ~~Before the Americans came to the island~~, ~~Gus had~~ He fished four days a week, worked his patch garden two days a week, and he spent all day Sunday in church. ~~Before~~ 1967, early in the 60s, a missionary had come to the island ~~&~~ stay nearly a year. The American had a machine that made electricity and with that electricity the missionary could operate his radio. He could talk on his radio set to other missionarys and even these airplanes that flew high above his island. Gus learned all about America from the missionary. One of the most vivid remembrances of his life was hearing, how American President Kennedy had been killed, (through the missionary's radio) That night the entire village had gathered at a special church service to pray for the ~~sole~~ soul of President Kennedy. Most of his village felt very close to America that night; some even said it was as if they, too, were Americans.

~~During~~ Thru the early ~~Bot~~ months of 1967, Gus worked and saved his dollars. Then one day a new American arrived on Portobello. ~~This new man arrived~~ in a small airplane, although to Gus and his fellow natives the word 'small' seemed out of place. ~~It was the biggest, prettiest airplane they had ever seen, no place~~; In fact, landing as it did just as the ~~first~~ developers' Americans made the new dirt runway safe,

developers were not the first Americans Gus had seen prior to their arrival

to land upon, it was the first airplane they had ever seen up close.

The new American stayed a few days and asked Gus and others what they wanted from 'the states'. Gus ~~thought and thought~~, counting his money over and over. Finally he got up the courage to tell the American what he wanted ~~him to bring back for him~~ from Florida.

'Bring me a car' Gus had asked. The man had laughed and explained it was not possible for him to fit a car inside of his ~~small~~ airplane. Gus was embarassed he had no concept of how big a car would be. He had turned to leave when the man had spoken again.

'How would you pay me for this car?' the man had asked.

Gus ~~had~~ proudly reached into his rear pocket and pulled out his new American hankerchief; a present from the American who operated the bulldozer machine. He unfolded the hankerchief and counted out his $84 American dollars, and then he said to the American pilot, 'Here, I ~~will~~ pay ~~for my new car~~ with this'."

"Gus", the man had said, 'I like you. But I ~~cannot~~ can't bring you a car from America for $84, no matter how much I like you. They cost far more than ~~$84~~ that'. Gus's heart had fallen. He still thought about that moment in his life, nearly 23 years before, each time he got into his 1980 Chevrolet van that he ~~can~~ presently owned. Gus remembered also what happened next.

"Gus, a new car costs thousands of dollars. That's not a brand new car, of course, but a nearly new car. We call them used cars in America. Cars that somebody has used before us. Do you know how long it will take you to save several thousand dollars?". Gus was embarassed at the time by the question. He had been taught to count in the evenings by the American who operated the bulldozer. The American would go to his boxes and take out

something he called "a case of beer". Then his ~~American friend~~ he would proceed to stack up the bottles on the table and arrange them in groups while Gus practiced counting. Gus could count to 24 quite easily now. He knew 100 was the next big number after his present savings of 84, but thousands? What was that? He didn't know at the time, but it certainly sounded like much more than 100.

His friend, the bulldozer operator, never got Gus beyond 100. Gus didn't drink himself, although many of his fellow villagers had taken up the American habit. His church elders told him drinking beer was bad. Gus would be an elder himself one day; perhaps soon. He didn't want to do anything bad; being an elder was the highest position in the island social structure. Gus wanted that very much. Besides, whenever he and his friend, the bulldozer operator, 'practiced counting' it always ended the same way; his friend drank every single one of the 24 bottles of beer and then he got sick and passed out on the floor of his hut. Gus couldn't understand why anyone would drink beer, get sick and pass out. Twenty three years later he still didn't understand this social activity.

Yes, Gus had been the first Portobello native to own a car. His car was the third one on the island ~~if you counted~~ after the two jeeps the Americans had. Gus didn't want a jeep; he had seen magazine pictures of shiney American cars. He had a tattered magazine picture of President Kennedy in his car, just before he was shot ~~and died~~. Gus wanted a car at least as big as the Presidents. The picture still stuck to the wall in his native home, more than 20 years after he discovered it in the bulldozer operator's stack of American magazines. Gus had cried all that night after he was given the magazine picture of President Kennedy in his car. ~~Gus~~ He knew that some-

from the American Missionary. He had also learned something else from the missionary.

first, then sobbing hysterically. She was alone in the back jump seat with the American couple and neither her mother nor father noticed her sobbing.

"What's the matter dear?" asked the American lady. She was reaching in her purse for a seldom used hankerchief which she patted against Camille's cheek.

Through tears and sobs, now attracting Karen, Camille explained her tears.

"I don't want to be black!" she sobbed. "None of my friends are black, and if I get black they won't be my friend anymore!".

Camille's outburst embarassed everyone but Gus. He laughed out hard vigorously.

"Don't you worry," he offered "you'll make many new friends here and," he added, "Many will be black."

Anthony bit his lip and Paul exchanged a worried look with Karen. Bart had a question for Gus.

"Do black kids have Christmas too?" he asked.

"Lordy yes," Gus responded."But our Santa Claus is black.And we don't give presents like you do",' almost adding 'yet'. Now Gus bit his lip. His children were fully grown, two sons. He had grandchildren as old as the three in his van. Christmas was a traditional day for islanders and as a boy it meant special services in church. As a middle aged adult, after the Americans came, it began to change. The church elders had opposed the American approach to Christmas for years but after Bill Conner, may his soul rest in peace, brought American television to the island ... well, every year the younger islanders had made Christmas more and more like the Christmas they saw on television. Now this Christmas, Gus and his wife had

nearly 10 miles ~~nearly ten miles~~ to the west ~~into~~ merging with the rapidly ~~escalating~~ deepening pink colored sky. ~~The reef, a line of near-surface level coral that surrounded most of the island about a mile off shore, was easily identified by the huge white breakers caused by the seas~~ surrounding the center island, about a mile offshore, the coral reef was foaming from the breaking waves as the sea rushed towards shore. rush~~ing~~ed towards shore ~~over the barely submerged demarcation line between shallow and very deep water~~.

All around The Erebus, and especially to the west, undulating hills rolled through the land scape. Karen noticed several new homes under construction on the hills nearby; homes that ~~were~~ had not been started just three months ago. She wondered if she and Paul would ever be able to afford one of those $400,000 homes. Alas, that was in the future. First Paul had to regain his self-confidence and this time she was going to watch everything he did, no matter how trivial it seemed at the time. After three bankruptcies in ten years in Toronto, ~~this~~ she knew feeling that maybe this was their last chance to make it as a family.

"Karen". It was Paul. "Gus is ready to go, now!". She detected a note of tension in his voice. No wonder; it had been quite a day. ~~Paul had come very close to losing it with the immigration lady~~, and then there had been the incident over the Christmas box. Pushing Bart ahead of her towards the van, she smiled to herself. "On the other hand," she thought, "she had almost blown it by pulling the 900 carefully set aside dollars out for the Customs man even after he had said ~~'No duty!'~~ let them pass. Paul had stopped her just in time; that ~~$900~~ money would surely come in handy as they ~~struggled~~ tries to get established here.

"Next stop, Miss Jill Murphy's," announced Gus as he pointed his van down the steep incline and ~~towards~~ back into the rutted road.

end chapter one

Chapter Two A

Jill Murphy's Porto Bello home was hers by divorce decree. ~~Laying~~ in the hills overlooking The Pond, the small two-bedroom home perched half way up the hill appeared to lean out over the water. The hills rose sharply here and the really wealthy people lived atop the hills. Jill's ex-husband was really wealthy; Jill was comfortably well off. Even this she hid from even her closest friends, including her dearest confident Patricia Pratt.

Jill was nearing 60 with two married daughters. She was now a grandmother but she kept this fact within a narrow circle of friends. Because she spent up to twelve hours each day outdoors, mostly in the sunshine, her skin had developed a deep bronze tint broken by lighter patches which she knew might one day require skin cancer care. She was no longer an attractive woman, but she was fit and physically very active. She walked with a peculiar gait which some described as 'Ram Rod'; in fact the natives called her by this name behind her back. Few knew every step was a pain to her; the unfortunate after-effect of being tossed from the back of a horse more than twenty years prior.

Jill had been married to a very successful self-made man. Everyone who knew Ken said he was intimidating and an over-achiever. Ken gave everything he had to everything that interested him. When she and Ken had been in their early thirties Ken had come home one day from an especially successful business trip announcing he was going to purchase an airplane. But first he had to learn how to fly. Jill accepted the challenge along with Ken and they both spent months attending the very best flight training schools in the United States. On graduation, Ken had advised Jill that when they flew together on a trip, he and he alone would pilot.

"If you want to fly, get your own airplane!" had been the last sentence he ever said to her on the subject. Which is exactly what Jill did. Only this turned out like everything else they did 'together'; Ken wanted to compete so badly that each trip turned out to be a two-plane race or contest of skills. When Jill held her own racing alongside Ken, or actually beat him, her victories were always short lived. He couldn't stand to be beaten by anyone at anything; and especially not Jill. After nearly twenty years of competing with Ken for everything from 'first in the shower' each morning to airplane piloting and horse back riding, she threw in the towel and moved out; taking their two teenage girls with her.

As soon as the girls were in college, Jill came to Portobello. She and Ken had owned property there and on one lot they had buiult a small vacation home with a detached guest house. Ken had reluctantly agreed to deed her the lot with the two buildings, but he retained other land that surrounded this lot in his own name.

For many years Jill had lived comfortably from the assets she gained in the divorce and a trust from her own maternal grandmother. She water skiied and fished and kept herself busy volunteering her time for local functions. But it bothered her that she wasn't earning any money. There were many other white ex-pat women on the island in a similar state of lifestyle. Most were content to follow the endless round of dinner parties and social affairs that peaked easch winter season when the part time residents returned. A few had purchased property and they dabbled in the ever escalating real estate market. It was not unusual for a particular building lot to double in price in just a year and people like Jill who lived on the island always had the inside track on such opportunities.

In her circle of friends were many who owned homes on the island but who occupied those homes only a month or two each year. Most of these owners would simply board up and leave when their vacations were over. At a dinner party several years prior, one of these couples had asked Jill if she would mind ' watching' their house while they were gone. It seemed like a harmless suggestion at the time.

Jill now 'watched' more than 30 homes on Portobello; and she was the resident manager for the newest and largest shopping and office complex since its American investor/owner chose to be absent from the island for weeks or months at a time.

On this particular Saturday just before Christmas, Jill had risen at 6AM with a long list of things to complete before the first airplanes appeared around 2 in the afternoon. She had three families returning to their homes for the Christmas holidays. Each had been thoroughly cleaned that week; the telephone, electricity and cable TV had been renewed in each, and the water cisterns and plumbing checked out. Jill had also gone provision shopping for each family, loading up on food, drink and alcoholic beverages. One of the homes had well maintained flower beds and Jill had borrowed from this to accent each of the homes. She also took an armful of flowers to the Catholic Church which she attended; she would remind everyone at church that she was the donor of the flowers.

Jill was an organized person but not infallible. Ken had delighted in pointing out her imperfections and she still cringed when somebody corrected her at something.

On this particular Saturday, transportation was to be a problem. While each of the families kept a car with their homes, Jill would never

agree to be responsible for vehicles. This was one day where she wished she could have simply taken each family's car to the airport so it would be available for them to drive home. Her own car, a battered Chevrolet, could carry only one family at a time; but not with much dignity.

Most of the white ex-pats liked being able to drive old clunkker cars on the island. Cars they would never enter at home they drove with affection over Portobello's poorly maintained, dusty, coral rock surfaced roads. The natives were recently addicted to fast, sporty cars, or oversized American chrome and flash vehicles. Today Jill wished she had a larger vehicle of some sort.

Jill's nearest and dearest friend Patricia Pratt had been urging Jill to invest in a van for months.

"Look, I don't mind going to the airport to help you transport these people to their homes, but think how it looks to these people; you in that old Chevy! They are trusting you with their half million dollar homes and they are paying you well to take care of them. I don't think you are handling this properly!".

Even to Patty she could not reveal her inner-most fears. Over the past several years as the tourism industry had grown rapidly, Portobello's natives had become more and more conscious of those whites in the community who were operating successful businesses. The all black government had created 'special requirements' for each white ex-pat they thought was profiteering from their tourism industry. Many of these whites, people Jill had known for years, had been silently forced to leave the island and in each case their businesses had ended up in native hands. Jill worried alot about this happening to her. Jill had decided, with the advice of a business

friend, to make her business activity as low profile as possible. She always described what she did as 'a hobby', trying to separate it from the business world. She was especially wary of acting as an agent for people's vacant homes but she did this anyhow because if she did not, she would lose the account. Only a few of her clients wanted to rent out their homes in their absence since most of her clients were hardly in need of additional revenue. A van, appearing at the airport to haul away arriving whites would be like a red flag to the natives. She was already under some suspicion from the taxi drivers since they considered every white face exiting from the customs' door to be fresh bait for themselves. The taxi drivers on Portobello, with the exception of their elder statesman Gus, were the most radical clan on the island. High pitched verbal shouting matches between drivers battling about who's taxi was next on the stand were a daily occurence. More than one tourist had wondered why in the world he had come to this island as he stood in the middle between two taxi drivers both trying to wrench his bags away from him in opposite directions.

'No, a van was not the answer' Jill mused to herself. 'That would be all I would need; pull up to the customs' hall with a van and gently lift a half dozen shiney white faces out of the grasp of the screaming native taxi drivers!'.

Jill's thoughts of the day were winding down in her mind and she sipped unconsciously on rum and coke. The ice cubes had all but melted now and the the rum and coke tasted more like rum and water. She was expecting Patty to drop by for a drink at any moment. The western sky was now fully pink, and Jill had begged off attending another in the endless round of Christmas week parties because she knew she would be exhausted from the hectic day. Patty

was stopping for two reasons; she expected a drink as a reward for helping Jill transport the three families to their homes that afternoon, and she would be looking for the latest, hottest gossip to carry with her to the dinner party.

Patty was everyone's friend. Some of the white ex-pats made uncomplimentary remarks about her behind her back, probably because Patty had as many black as white friends and spent as much time with the blacks as with the whites. Patty was a nurse at the local clinic and with the detached air of someone whom people depended upon for medical assistance and advice, sooner or later everyone told all of their secrets to Patty. She was careful never to divulge a medical confidence, but not above recommending to a friend that they not 'date' a particular person 'for medical reasons'. Many dozens owed Patty a debt of gratitude since she had steered them away from potentially dangerous inter-personal relationships. It was a poorly kept secret that Portobello had one of the highest incident rates for AIDS of any location in the world.

Nearly a quarter mile from her home, a car slowed and made a loud grinding noise as it bounced off the unpaved road and onto Jill's rutted driveway. Jill did not hear the car but as the headlights swept across her poirch she was aware of a visitor. She unwound herself from the plastic covered love seat and told her two diogs laying by her what she was thinking.

"Ooops...Patty is here. Time for a Gin and tonic!". The dogs followed her to the kitchen just off the porch hoping this was mealtime. Patty's G and T was mostly tonic this time of night. A new six pack of tonic water came out from beneath the counter and Jill popped the lid as headlights danced across

her kitchen cabinets.

"Damn ... another six psack they left in the sun too long!". Jill headed to the extra closetr off her bedroom for a replacement.

Portobello's merchants claimed they were at the end, the very end, of the worldwide distribution system. Everything consumed came from Miami; a three or four day sea voyage with 20 and 40 foot containers stuffed onto an ancient freighter. 'Fresh produce', flown in once per week, was almost never 'fresh'. Meat had left the Miami distributor forzen, and then sat on the Miami docks for hours or even days where it thawed. Once on board the ship, the refrigerated containers were poorly ~~if even~~ maintained so at best the forzen goods arrived at Portobello as mush; a semi-frozen state of rethawing after having regained Miami air temperature at the docks. What happened to the meat after it finalluy arrived on the island was even worse.

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Bottled drinks often lost their 'fizz' because they sat for hours or days in the hot South Florida or Caribbean air before being properly stored. The really wealthy people, 'up the hill' beyond Jill, flew in their own tonic water and soft drinks just to avoid this problem. Jill knew she could afford to do this herself, but that would merely attract attention to her. That was a status symbol she could ill afford.

She heard a vehicle door open and the voice she heard was not the voice she anticipated.

"Jill, I bring friends to you". Everyone knew Gus's voice and his words were so unexpected she dropped the new can of tonic water to the floor near her foot. The contents were spilling on the floor when a face appeared in her doorway.

"Hi, remember me...oops, us!". The man with long, thin hair was moving aside to display an attractive but bedraggled lady grasping the hand of a

small boy.

Jill's mind went blank. Yes, the faces were familiar but she could not place them. She started to answer ~~the qwuestion~~ when the man spoke again.

"No, really....".

"We are the Monasto's from Toronto. You were supposed to meet us at the airport today. Remember, we are moving here to start a cabinent making business!".

Jill's hand went to her throat and she searched her mind for some identity for these people. There were now five of them standing just inside the kitchen doorway and Gus had lumbered up her stairs to stand behind them.

'Cabinet making business?' That was a blank. 'A mother, a father and at least three kids moving here to Portobello??' Another blank. 'Toronto???'. That at least was familiar.

Obviously these people ~~at least~~ thought she knew them, and they also had expected her to meet them at the airport today. But why?

"Look, it was three months ago" began Paul. "We met you at the Mexican restaurant and we talked about going home to sell our possessions and return here to live". A clue. Jill searched her mind. She often ate out at the Hey Jose restaurant a couple of nights each week. It was located in the shopping and office complex she managed and after long hours in the office she liked going there for ~~Pizza or a Mexican dinner~~. And everytime she was there she invariably met some island-struck person or couple. They always said the same things.

'We love it here. What a wonderful place to live. We plan to go home, wrap up our affairs and move here'. And she always had the same helpful responses. 'Why of course I would be happy to help you find a place to live

here' she would say. 'Let me give you my business card and you can telephone or FAX me with your requirements.'

"The Mantasos?" she said out loud.

"No, Monastos" corrected Paul. "What about our two FAX messages; what about the FAX you sent to us telling us you had found a place for us to rent"?

Jill shook her head in ~~befuddlement~~. This was one of her recurriung nightmares; somebody showing up on her doorstep at dusk with no place to stay and the island would be full. On this Saturday before Christmas she instantly knew this was a real crisis. She was trying to explain all of this to the now teary eyed man when a new set of headlights bounced up her driveway. 'Let that be Patty' she prayed to her self in her most catholic manner.

Paul Monasto was doing all of the talking for the family. It was now becoming clear that he had indeed sent two FAX messages, first confirming their interest in a house, and then just days ago a second FAX confirming their arrival time and date. Jill had responded that she had never received either FAX.

"Lady, you can't make me believe that. We have your FAX telling us about the two bedroom home you had reserved for us!" He was pawing through a pocket filled with wrinkled sheets of paper when the ~~lady~~ with him, Jill presumed this to be his wife, produced a copy of a FAX from a folder in her oversized purse.

Jill took the piece of paper from the lady, and trying her best to give back a reassuring smile, began to read:

PAUL AND KATHY MONASTO/TORONTO,CANADA/416-889-3419

NOVEMBER 19, 1990

REF YOUR FAX NOV 10, GOOD NEWS. HAVE TWO BEDROOM PRIVATE HOME, AVAILABLE DECEMBER 20 TO APRIL 01 AT $1,400 PER MONTH. ADVISE IF SATISFACTORY AND YOUR ARRIVAL DATE. WILL MEET YOU AT AIRPORT.

And it was signed.

J.MURPHY/PORTEBELLO/BRITISH WEST INDIES

Jill was reading it over a third time, not believing her eyes, when a welcome voice broke the silence.

"Hi there Miz Murphy; introduce me to all of your friends!' Patty was dressed in a loose silken top that revealed perhaps half of her ample bosom. And tight, matching silk slacks with white flats. Her tinted nearly blonde hair hung over her short neck. She was, Jill noticed, perfectly dressed to sit down on a couch at a cocktail party so the men could stand above her and talk while looking straight down her top to her pantiless thighs. For 61 years of age, Patty was a knockout and this was one of the reasons Jill never went to a party with Patty. She felt she was no match.

Gus was introducing everyone to Patty who wrapped her arms around his waist and hugged as he did so. Jill was trying to figure out what to do next.

Patty was a take charge kind of person and Jill's mournful eyes pleaded with her for assistance.

"Is this the FAX?" she asked taking it from Jill's hand. She too read the FAX while Karen was apologizing to Gus for keeping him away from his family at dinner time. Gus assured her that his business came first and besides he wouldn't leave them until they had a place to stay.

"You all stay with me" he finally said, not certain as to why he was

making that offer. Perhaps it was the Christmas season. Karen reached out and squeezed his rough, over sized black palm smiling up at the helpful man.

"You are good enough to be a Saint Gus" she responded. Gus beamed all over and suddenly he felt like it really was Christmas time. This was the first time he'd felt that feeling in years.

"OK, let's take it from the top" suggested Patty. "First we have five people from Canada who have arrived on our lovely island just before Christmas. They have no place to stay. Doesn't that sound familiar???".

Only Gus understood she was recalling the story of the birth of Jesus.

"You apparently don't know what to do with these people" she said pointing at Jill. "Gus says they can stay at his house; and I ... I have a party to go to. Say, that reminds me, where is my Gin and Tonic?".

Jill scrambled to clean up the mess on the floor and found it already dry. Two dogs looked up at her sheepishly and she knew where the tonic water went. 'Thank God there was no gin in what I spilled' she told herself. Seconds later Patty had her drink which she raised to the ceiling. "Now, let's get to the bottom of this. Jill, what happened to these people's house? Did you rent it to somebody else???".

Normally Jill would have felt betrayed by her friend who sounded like she was only making things worse. But something inside of her said 'No, Patty is handling this beautifully so just play along'. Jill explained that inspite of the FAX Patty still grasped in her free hand, she knew nothing about these people except she did vaguely remember meeting them last fall at Hey Jose. She never received any FAXes from them; she never sent them a FAX. And she certainly did not send the FAX which Patty had in her hand.

"And" she continued "there have not been any two bedroom houses available

on this island in months. I would have never sent such a message".

Paul saw disaster looming just ahead. He rationalized that he might send two FAXes to somebody and they might not arrive where directed, but he couldn't fathom how he would get one back from someone who never got his first FAX unless it had arrived. Instantly he determined Jill was lying and he said so. Said what?

"Hold on" broke in Patty. "Let's save that for another day. Right now we have to deal with where you people are going to stay, at least tonight, and probably for a week or two until things quiet down with the tourists. Jill, how soon before you could get these people into one of your 'hobby houses'?". She loved to rib Jill about her business.

Jill thought hard. It wasn't easy given the pressure of the moment and this almost strange man standing here in her kitchen calling her a liar. Given a choice, she wouyldn't help them find a place to live at all. But there was that FAX to consider.

"Ahhh...there is the Marshfield house but it wouldn't be available until mid January and that would be far more than $1,400 per month. Besides it has four bedrooms".

"Oh boy, a bedroom for everyone!" cried Camille who was especially upset over losing her private bedroom back in Toronto.

Jill ignored the child. "And there is the Yinger...no, wait a minute; I have it! The Whitebourn house will be empty January 3rd and it never rents for more than $1,500 a month. I think I can talk David and Petula into leasing it for say $1,400 per month if you will agree to take it for ...say, 11 months?".

It was becoming decision time. Karen had stayed out of the conversation

to this point. Inside, her stomach was tied in knots and for the first time she trully regretted ever suggesting the family move to this funny island. She took command again.

"I think I like that. But what do we do until January 3rd?".

Patty instantly recognized where this family's strength was hidden and she turned to Karen and began organizing their affairs.

"OK, Jill has one spare bedroom and those two couches in the living room. That will work for tonight, won't it Jill?". Before Jill could answer Karen spoke again.

"That's a fine idea, isn't it Paul. We are all so very tired from the full day of traveling..."

Patty continued. "Now, tomorrow Gus and I will find you a place to stay until January 3rd. Jill will make the arrangements with the Whitebourn's for after the 3rd. Good, it's all settled. Now, Jill, how about refreshing my drink?".

Gus, Peter and Anthony disappeared down the stairs to bring up the family's luggage. When piled in the middle of the living room, there would barely be room for walking. And polite conversation over the top of the stack would be impossible.

Jill, in shell shock started to refill Patty's drink as Karen and Patty walked over to her. The children and the dogs disappeared onto the back porch.

Karen spoke first.

"I want to thank you, both of you, for this mercy saving mission. We had planned everything so carefully and we thought we had done very well to get everything arranged...".

Jill interrupted when she saw Karen dabbing her cheeks with a paper tissue from her purse. "I know you don't believe me but I never saw that FAX before. I never saw your FAXes and I simply do not understand how all of this happened. But I can't let you go off and stay at Gus's house...I mean, well, it just wouldn't be suitable."

Patty was smiling. "It would have been just fine, Jill, but these people need a half-way house for a night or two. They left white civilization behind in Toronto and to drop them into the native world here without a period of time to adjust would have been a mistake."

Turning to Karen, she continued "We will get to the bottom of the FAX mess but it may take a day or two. Regardless, it is as Jill says. There are no two bedroom homes available tonight and unless we find something in the next day or two, you will stay here with her. She won't mind, will you Jill?" and she turned to glare at her friend who believed that down deep Patty was blaming her for the entire mess.

"Now, there is one ritual we have not properly observed here Jill. Karen, what do you and Paul drink?". Patty began to pull bottles from Jill's liquor closet while Karen assisted by emptying an ice tray.

The van empty Gus returned a final time to say good bye and to renew his offer that the family could stay with him. Gus was already like family; it was strange how this older black man, not a part of their generation or culture, could be taken so warmly into their hearts in such a short period of time. As Gus worked his way down the thin driveway after narrowly missing Patty's car, Patty announced her intention to leave as well.

"Tomorrow" she announced to the room since nobody was near her at that moment "we will scour this island to find you temporary living quarters".

In the meamntime you can all pitch in to help Jill get a dinner put together. I'm certain you will all eat and crash in short order. Me, I am going to a dinner party and let the men dribble their drinks on me! Good night all".

-end-

CHAPTER tHREE/

Polly Conner was somebody to be feared. She had achieved a social and business position on Portobello which ~~no person~~ few dared discuss openly. There was an aura about the lady which sent fear through anyone who had to face her directly. When her busband, Bill, was living, she knew why people automatically deferred to her in public and private. It was out of respect for what Bill had done for Portobello and the whole of the Turks and Caicos.

There were white ex-pats and there were white British government officials. And there were black ex-pats and the black natives. Bill Conner fit into none of these convenient nitches. Yes he was white, and yes he was an 'ex-patriot' island resident. But if you asked a native to list every single ex-pat on Portobello, most would not have included Bill Conner on that list. Ask them why they left Conner off the list and they would say something like 'Bill Conner? Ahhh, he ex-pat but he O.K., not like rest of them! He like me.'

Openly, Bill Conner was hardly a beloved man. Most of the native government officials were fearful of the power he could wield with his radio stations and television cable network. To be sure, while he did use that power sparingly and then only under what he considered the most pressing of circumstances, the threat of that power was always on their government minds. The native government personnel blamed the British for allowing control of the national airways to slip away in the late 1970s to a 'foreigner'; Bill Conner. To be sure, it had been a British Governor who at the time personally intervened to grant Conner the authority to bring radio and television to the islands. But it had been a native government official, with the full sanction of his national party, which sought out Conner and

talked him into visiting the islands in the first place for that very purpose.

Conner's modest start, a small satellite dish coupled to a flea-powered ten watt TV transmitter housed in his teenage son's bedroom, seemed innocent enough in the fall of 1979. These first-ever television transmissions merely relayed programs transmitted via satellite from the United States and the ten watt transmitter reached but a small segment of Portobello.

The population of Portobello was perhaps 900 in 1979. Of this, there were fewer than 100 whites. Many of the whites had been miffed about the coming of television.

'I came here because the United States has been ruined, homogenized, by television and the media' one had angrily told Conner shortly after he began his service. 'Now you have brought it here; I don't like it!'.

The Portobello natives however loved it. They couldn't wait until they had TV sets in their homes. In just over a decade their island had lept into the 20th century; first roads and cars, then electricity and refrigerators, followed by color television and solid state boom boxes.

Television was the major factor; with it they learned all about the outside world and the toys of that world. The more they saw, the more the wanted,and,the more they became like Americans; since virtually all of their television came via satellite from the USA.

Early on, Conner recognized their quest to see more, to know more,and he had added TV channels until there were seven in all. But in his mind even that was not enough; though it was 6 more than the Bahamas had or 5 more than Jamaica. So he had switched his TV from over the air broadcast to cable and when he married Polly in 1985 the 32 channel cable system was believed

to be one of the most modern in the world. There was live European TV from the BBC in London, live South American TV from Venezuela and Brasil, seven channels via satellite from Canada and the balance representing every important service offered in America. It was such a diverse selection of television that people actually vacationed on the island to stay indoors and switch from continent to continent, source to source all day and night. It was a dial twisters delight.

Polly Conner inherited the controlling interest in this cable system, four radio stations, and a sizeable collection of quite prime real estate when he died. She had been dabbling in the travel agency business for three years on Portobello before his death, and prior to her marriage to Bill she and her first husband had built up a very successful electronics manufacturing business at home in Wisconsin.

Bill and Polly had been married only three years when one day he told her he needed to go to the states for a medical check-up. Normally she would have been at his side but this time he convinced her someone had to stay behind to mind the businesses. He never returned to the island, dieing only a week after leaving. Bill had called her one night to say he was coming home the next day; only the next day the clinic had called to say he had died during the night.

Polly had at first retreated into a shell so thick that not even the couple's dearest friends could penetrate it. Then one day several months later she had suddenly reappeared in their business offices and in town at the bank. She made it very plain to everyone she encountered that she was firmly in control, of everything. To each she had said 'And if you need something, ANYthing, you come to see me. Don't go to anyone else. I will

handle ALL of your problems.'

Every aspect of the radio and television business now received new scrutiny. Polly had reports on her desk every morning; the identity of every new subscriber to the cable system and their location. Every new radio station advertiser had to be passed by her before the advertiser was allowed on the radio. This was a private arrangement she had with the radio station manager, and those advertisers turned away never knew it was because Polly Conner herself had vetoed their use of her radio for their paid advertisements.

Polly's own business, the travel agency, went into a rapid expansion mode. The island did not have guided tours for tourists. Polly brought in tour buses and hired taxi-drivers to operate them. Each driver was schooled on how to conduct tours, what to say, when to say it. And every tourist who took such a tour ended up on a list which Polly reviewed at the end of each day. She knew who was on the island and where they had come from; at all times. Her travel agency represented Pan American as well as the air charter operators coming to Portobello. Each day she had access to the incoming passenger lists and often her agency was also involved in the hotel booking process. That gave her access to their credit card numbers and with those numbers, her staff could quickly determine who had high or even unlimited credit. And all of those with unlimited credit or credit limits of $25,000 and up arrived on yet another daily report on her desk.

Polly Conner was to be feared because Polly Conner knew more about the people on the island than anyone else. The mystery to those few who suspected she collected such information was simply 'But, what does she do with this it?' No-one, not even her attorney Herbert McPherson,

would have fantasized the truth.

Polly Conner's 1990 pre-Christmas trip had been painful. Her first husband, Allen, had insisted they not have children. As a devout Catholic, this had been difficult for Polly to accept as he never at hinted this before their marriage. Each Christmas she had tried to make up in little ways for not having children. For example, she always purchased a toy, a real toy, for Allen. He had received electric trains, tin soldiers, and for each year of their 18 year marriage there was a German hand carved wooden nut cracker on a shelf in his den. Familiar with the routine, comfortable with what it did for her, Polly had tried the same approach with Bill. Only Bill had four children and he never appreciated fully the meaning of an electric train or a new German nut cracker for his den shelf. Polly was determined however and so each Christmas she had arranged for such presents to greet Bill. This was now the second Christmas without Bill. No more Bill, no Allen. When Polly had returned from shopping in Fort Lauderdale on this Saturday flight, she had carried with her the 25th German nut cracker she had bought in 25 years. This one she would wrap and place under the tree and when on Christmas morning all of the presents for her now-annual house guests would be opened, she would take the unmarked box with her to what had been Bill's den. There she would shut the door, unwrap the nutcracker, and for at least 30 minutes she would hold the German piece to her breast and sob to herself. Then she would stand up, adjust her skirt and blouse, wipe her eyes and carefully place the nutcracker on the shelf next to the others. On the way back to her guests, Polly would slip into the den bathroom to reapply her eye makeup, and straighten her hair.

Tonight she was alone in the house Bill built, by choice. All of the

presents, including the nutcracker, were to be wrapped. In the two days remaining until Christmas there would be two more Pan American flights and each would bring house guests for her Christmas. She wondered why she had invited 9 people to the island for Christmas. 'Never mind, it is too late now' she told herself. There were meals to prepare, presents to wrap, and five days of business records to review. A business associate had traveled back with her this day but she had asked him to stay at the Ramada, only a few hundred yards up her beach, for tonight. Even her maid and yard boy had been dismissed this evening.

Out of habit she picked up the five day stack of papers reporting on the activities of her travel agency. She skimmed the reports reading the bottom line numbers first. Her head was faster than an electronic calculator and her mind was a quick access set of statistics to the comparable numbers of last December; and the one prior. She smiled her private, all knowing smile realizing her business was running 12% ahead of the year before. Rippling the 'contact sheets' from the travel agency's special 'private meetings' task force, one caught her eye. She stopped to read through the hand-completed form.

CONTACT: Averill duPont, III

HOME: Wilmington, Deleware

ARRIVAL: 19/12/90

PURPOSE: Wants to buy vacation home, likes south shore line.

STATUS: Married, three children in college at Princeton

PREFERENCES: Liked me on top, prolonged oral.

DATA: Ramada room 134, alone

COMMENTS: None

REP: Sonya

She set the form aside by itself on her oversized mahogony work table. There were three keyboards on Polly's desk. Each was locked and she carried the keys on a golden chain either around her neck or in her constant companion waist-worn lizard skin belly bag. She reached for the chain and lifted the keys from their resting place between her two ultra-white breasts. Selecting the red key she unlocked one of the keyboards and applied power to the laptop word processor.

As the laptop completed its RAM testing sequence Polly retrieved the contact report sheet and rescanned the terse report. Approvingly, she thought to herself 'Sonya is at last learning to cut out the crap. Now she needs to work on her summary.'

Each 'contact report' was an important document to Polly Conner. These reports formed the nucleus of her strength on Portobello. She was informed by them and sometimes she was excited by what they said. The information would be put to excellent use; promptly. The excitement would keep her going for a day or two until another shot of adenilin tickled her veins from a contact that had not yet happened. She turned to the waiting word processing program and selected the commands to gain entry to her outward bound 'Memo' file.

'S#1' it began.

'REF A. duPont; excellent form but "prolonged oral" begs further detailed explanation. Please correct in future.'

Polly never signed her contact staff memos; a precaution against them being discovered by a snoop. The contact girls, or CGs as she called them, had strict instructions to tear all written memos into small pieces and

flush them down a toilet immediately after reading them. Girls had been demoted or fired on the spot for disobeying this routine.

The laptop was given three new commands which would assure the memo would be in Sonya's hands by 8 AM the next morning; even if it would be Sunday. That realization shocked her; the Sunday prior to Christmas! She was in charge of the special pre-Christmas service at the country's only Catholic church and, she glanced at her watch, it was now 9 PM. There were still many details to cover before 8 AM Sunday. She pushed herself back from the work table, and stopped. duPont needed attention, now; church or no church.

Three telephones hung on the wall to the left of her table. There was a headset attached to each and these allowed her to move freely about the room while engaged in long telephone conversations on any of the instruments. Mechanically, a well practiced routine, she reached for the headset on the yellow phone and set it softly over her Fort Lauderdale hairdo. She reached to the wall instrument and pushed the fourth memory dial button. Then she got up from her leather covered executive chair and walked to a file cabinet across the room.

"deNuff here" answered the voice at the other end.

"Bob, I am home".

"Jesus Christ I'm glad to hear that. Things have been too damned quiet around here for five days! Did you enjoy your-".

"Later, I have a lead for you and I don't know how long he will be here. His name is " and she turned to her work table to pick up the sheet of paper, "Averill duPont the third and he's from Wilmington. This should bring back some memories to you. He's interested in a building lot on the south shore; he's at the Ramada without his wife or three children."

"God, how I'd like to sell some property back to the duPonts! He must be a cousin or something. Did you know there are more than 1,000 duPonts now and each is at least a millionaire--".

"Got to run Bob, let me know how it turns out". And she clicked off the headset switch, removing the instrument delicately from her head leaving real estate seller Bob deNuff staring at his own handset now filled with the buzzing dial tone.

Chapter Four

Jill Murphy instinctively pulled the sheet over her head when the new morning sun poured through the open wooden shutters of her bedroom window. She was not awake as a tiny voice said to her "This is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen". Jill sat upright with a burst of energy and tossed the sheet aside. There, sitting up beside her was Camille Monasto intently staring through the open window at the sunrise basking The Pond below in brilliant orange streamers of light.

"Have you been awake long?" mumbled Jill, trying to recall why this small white girl was in bed with her. It all came back in a flash.

"When you moved the sheet I woke up" said the little girl. "Is it like this every morning?".

Jill knew the answer was 'yes, but...'. She couldn't remember the last time she had awoken with a small youngster in her bed. Large white men, medium sized black men, yes. But a small, white girl...not even her grand daughter had ever slept with her.

"Let's go see about breakfast" responded Jill; "you let me use the bathroom and then it will be your turn!".

Camille was already out of bed and running through the door to the guest bedroom across the hallway. "Mommy, Daddy...come see the beautiful sunrise," she was calling. Jill could her Paul's muffled voice of protest through the half opened doorway. "Good God honey, do you know what time it is?". Then Karen's softer voice. "Good morning Camille, is Mrs. Murphy up yet?"

It was only minutes past 6 AM but the winter sun was already in full view. Portobello had elected to remain in the eastern time zone even though

it should really ~~in~~ in ~~the~~ Atlantic ~~time zone~~. The politicians knew most of their tourists and virtually all of the country's business ties were associated with the eastern shoreline of the United States. So they 'fudged' a little and kept local clocks on eastern time to make the tourism and business worlds easier to handle. Only Club Med elected to operate on Atlantic time; they said it gave them more useful hours of sunlight at the end of the day, especially in winter. The locals adjusted by always saying 'Club Med Time' when they had an appointment with somebody at Le Club.

Jill's shower was running at full force, which was not much force since water was precious this time of year, ~~as~~ Karen left her bedroom to check on the two boys, Bart and Tony, ~~who had been~~ assigned to sleep on the couches in the living ~~room~~. Both boys required special, intensive care to awaken as the day before had been one of the most exhausting of their young lives.

Karen and Jill had talked alone just before retiring, ~~and~~ Karen had learned ~~that~~ Jill ~~was~~ to attend a special pre-Christmas church service this morning. Jill had invited them to join her, and Karen's instant reaction had been 'Oh no!' She had tossed and turned for almost an hour thinking about that response.

~~She~~ and Paul ~~had been~~ married in a non-sectarian chapel. They had never attended church in 13 years of marriage, nor during the three prior years when they had lived together. She had grown up in a family that only attended church on Easter and occasionally at Christmas. She had to dig deeply to remember what kind of church it had been; Presbyterian as it turned out.

Paul on the other hand had been raised in a strict Catholic environment. He ~~had been~~ a choir boy, a server and he had carried the cross into the

church in front of the priest for several years. When he ran away from home and Catholic high school at 16, he had vowed he would never set foot in a Catholic church again. This was a cause of serious friction between Paul and his family; each of his brothers and sisters were raising their children in the same Catholic setting they had been raised in.

Karen knew Jill's invitation was more than simple courtesy. She had casually mentioned Paul's upbringing as a Catholic in their conversation and she quickly noticed how Jill's tired eyes had flashed with excitement. Now with the morning sun greeting their first full day as a family on Portobello, she vowed this was a time to forget the past and start anew.

"Wake up Bart; you too Tony" she nudged gently. "We are going to church". Both boys sat up sleepily and rubbed their eyes.

"Church, Mom?" asked Tony through a stifled yawn. "You did say church!"

"Yes, I said church; Catholic church. Come on, let's get these covers picked up so Jill won't have to do it. Then you can help me find you some church cloths in these bags!".

Camille came into the living room to report, "Daddy says he's going to sleep some more". Bart corrected her before Karen could speak.

"We are going to church; Catholic church," he exclaimed proudly. Camille looked at her mom for confirmation and bolted back to her parent's bedroom. Paul was not ready for the words he heard her say. Karen was right behind her but too slow to stop the announcement.

"Daddy, daddy, we are going to Catholic church. Oh, it will be just like a real Christmas with church and everything-".

"Bullshit, over my dead-". Karen interrupted him with a terse "shhh" and her fingers to her lips. Jill was just exiting the bathroom sandwiched

between the two bedrooms and she ~~had~~ caught only the tail end of the conversation.

"Good morning you all!" she announced, ~~while~~ fluffing her hair with a towel. "The shower is ready for the next one; please remember how short we are of water and keep your shower short!". With that she popped ~~back~~ into her bedroom and closed the door behind her.

'So' thought Jill,' Karen decided to go to church afterall. It remained to be seen whether Paul or even the kids came with her. Wouldn't that be a feather in her cap if she showed up with five new potential Catholics in tow!' With a regular attendence of fewer than 50, ~~at her~~ church, the entire congregation was under pressure to keep the church open. As a part of the Archdiosese from the Bahamas, it wasn't really an official church, yet. The Bishop ~~had~~ told them the church would continue to provide a priest and support but only if the congregation beat the bushes for new members. They had tried enticing the French speaking staff at Club Med to attend, ~~placing~~ printed cards in ~~every~~ hotel room. Polly Conner had far more announcements on radio and TV than she should run given the size of the Catholic group on Portobello. They even had lists of people who have been brought up Catholic or who had attended the church elsewhere. Each had been visited and revisited with invitations to attend. It wasn't working very well, and with the exception of Polly Conner's uncanny ability to reach visiting Catholics there on vacation, and to talk them into attending, the church was not doing well.

"Wouldn't Polly Conner be jealous when Jill appeared with five people!" she mused softly to herself.

"Paul, hear me out" began Karen. "When Jill invited us last night I told

her no way. But I couldn't sleep for the longest time after I did that. I know how much pain you have from your childhood. Maybe it wouldn't be the same now you are a father yourself. Please, please, let us go just this one Sunday. Remember we did come here to start a totally new life. It would mean so much to the children and I know Jill would be very grateful if we went".

"Karen, the last person I feel obligated to at the moment is Jill. If she hadn't screwed up, we'd be in our own home right now and none of this would have come up. Having said that, the rest of your argument is sound. This is Christmas, this is a brand new start for all of us, and I guess it wouldn't hurt if we all went to church with her. Just don't expect me to carry the cross down the aisle!"

Karen did something she rarely did. She threw both arms around Paul and grabbed through the sheet at his testicles, laughing loudly. They rolled over on the bed giggling and professing their love for one another as Camille, torn between staying and watching her mommy and daddy and being the first to tell the boys something important, finally raced to the living room to announce the decision.

"Daddy is going to church too!" she screamed. In her bedroom, buttoning up a white cotton dress, Jill broke out in a wide grin when she heard the news through the closed door.

Portobello's Catholic church had been built on property donated by the government. Just across Windward Highway was the Anglican Church; a few hundred yards on towards town a church being built by the island's most successful native businessman; Avery Watson Burgess. Their building was unlike most Catholic churches because the Bishop of the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands believed the community needed a community center

more than they needed another church, ~~at this stage~~ of development. After spending $115,000 for the building, the money had run out so the building sat on barely graded bush and rough ground, and there was no formal, nor dedicated parking area. Because the building was off the highway a considerable distance, people could not park on the highway. So those who came late were always subjected to pulling their vehicles off the road into the bush. Jill and the five Monastos arrived 45 minutes before the service was scheduled to begin. Polly Conner was already there and she was ~~talking~~ with the priest at the alter when Jill entered. Two white men, visitors Polly had rounded up and brought with her, sat towards the rear of the oblong hall.

"Why good morning and Merry Christmas" greeted Polly. "I suppose we have you to thank once again for the lovely floral arrangements!". Jill beamed with pride and to make certain the visiting priest knew she was responsible for the flowers she replied "Why yes, I searched all over the island yesterday for these blossoms; they do add a nice touch, don't you agree?" addressing the priest directly.

"Bless you my child" said the priest; not a day younger than 80. "I am amazed how such a small congregation can maintain such a functional facility. I am Father McClaskey ", bowing slightly towards Jill.

"I am Jill Murphy" she replied, and ~~then casting~~ a glance at Polly to see if she was paying attention, ~~she~~ turned to the Monastos. "This is the Monasto family; they arrived only yesterday from Toronto and they have immigrated here" she said proudly. "This is Paul, his wife Karen, and these are Bart, Camille and Anthony".

Anthony corrected Jill. "Tony" he said, not sure whether he should reach

out to shake the priest's hand. He had never been in a Catholic church in his life; for that matter, only one church at all. ~~And~~ his parents didn't know about the time he had stayed over with his friend Donny and attended church with them.

Polly was gazing at Jill with a piercing stare. "Welcome to Portobello," she said to the family and turning back to Jill asked, "My goodness, I didn't know we had a new Canadian family migrating to the island. Why didn't you tell me about this before, Jill?" Polly was making a mental note to find out how her intelligence network had missed these new arrivals.

Jill looked away from Polly's eyes and out the window. "Well, it is too long a story for right now; let's just say they are a surprise to me as well."

Polly was not satisfied. "Tell me Paul, what do you plan to do here?" She was disregarding Karen and the children for the moment.

Paul bit his lip, remembering his brief recognition of Mrs. Conner at the airport ~~as~~ when they arrived. There was an aura of authority about the lady and he knew there had to be good reason why so many of the ex-pats he and Karen met during their fall visit spoke of her only in guarded terms. He took a deep breath and let it go.

"I am a wood worker and I have operated businesses in Canada building cabinets, furniture and kitchens," he started. "We ~~will~~ plan to do that here. The housing boom we saw when we first came here three months ago tells me there is a need for this sort of business here".

"I see," answered Polly. "But you do realize ~~that~~ the government maintains very close reins on new businesses ~~here~~ and during the past two years there have been ~~only~~ a handful of new businesses approved for immigrants?" Polly

disliked the term ex-pat and she would never be heard in public describing people as black or white.

"Yes, we know that," responded Paul. He was suddenly very nervous because this lady had instantly pinpointed the one part of ~~this~~ move which concerned him the most. He had a plan, and even a handshake agreement to deal with the closed-shop policy of the native government, but he worried whether he could count on this agreement. Suppose he had uprooted the family to this distant ~~point~~ and it all fell apart?

"I think we have that covered," and he winked at Mrs. Conner before he realized how foolish that must appear. He thought fast ~~how~~ to change the subject and blurted out, "I believe you operate the radio and TV here; Karen is a very experienced radio and television broadcaster. You two have that in common".

Polly Conner ~~noted~~ his emotional outburst ~~away for~~ future reference and turned with sincere interest to Karen. Choosing her words carefully, she asked ~~Karen~~ "Will you be looking to resume your broadcasting career here?".

Karen was caught totally unprepared for this twist in the conversation. "Well, no, I don't think so. Moving here is such a change for our family and the children will need lots of specialized care at least during the next few months. And, Paul and I work together as a team. Besides, Paul didn't ~~tell you~~ I haven't been active in broadcasting for more than a decade".

The church was beginning to fill now and Polly Conner had details to tend to. She elected to cut the conversation short.

"Paul, if you need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call on me. Sometimes just being established here can open doors for a newcomer. Karen, I'd like to talk with you more about your broadcasting experience. When you

get settled, please call me. And children, welcome to Portobello". With that she turned quickly to the priest and began going over the service's sequence.

Jill knew she had been 'dismissed' and nervously she helped the Monasto family find five chairs. Polly Conner went through the ritual steps related to the service but split her mind into two segments; a trick she had learned while in business with her first husband. In the second segment Polly tried to piece together the Monasto puzzle.

'Families arrived new to Portobello each week. White families only came now after arranging a relationship with a native person. She hadn't exaggerated the government policy regarding immigrant businesses to Paul. So who was Paul's business partner? Which local native businessman needed cabinets and interior finishing work in homes he was building? She'd call Avery Burgess immediately after church; he would probably know.

'Karen's background was especially interesting. Of all of her business activities, the four radio stations created the biggest headaches. The government wanted her to employ only native announcers and news people. She had resisted at first because her Bill had also tried and failed to find native help that could be relied upon. Her radio stations were the day to day pulse of the community since the newspaper was at best weekly and often it slipped two weeks between issues. Nearly one year ago, after going through five natives in ten months she had called on some favors through her native friends and gotten government permission to bring in an experienced stateside radio person. She had started by bringing in a black American, calculating his skin color would make him more palatable to the natives. Unfortunately this fellow immediately decided he was far brighter and far

more worldly than the natives and his arrogant ~~air~~ ~~had~~ brought howls of protest from black and white alike.

'God how she missed Bill in a situation like the radio stations faced. When he was here, he did the news and ran the radio stations himself. The whites knew he was white and the ~~natives~~ didn't think of him as white; just as their friend Bill Conner. How could he just up and leave her without warning or notice? She could never forgive him for that!'

'Now her radio stations were on their second white ex-pat manager in 6 months and the present one was a closet boozer who often disappeared just when he was most needed. Just last week he had allowed two advertisers on the radio after she had said no ~~on~~ both, and he had run a news story ~~that~~ her dearest native friend, Avery Burgess, had found offensive.

'Yes, she needed to find a better person to head up the local radio operation. She would check out this Karen Monasto person the very minute her contacts in Toronto were in their offices Monday morning.'

Her next- step plans in place, Pauline Conner 'clicked off' the magical second channel of her mind and concentrated on the pre-Christmas service now underway. There was an encouraging turnout on this almost holiday Sunday. Every folding chair was ~~filled~~ ~~and~~ perhaps 20 people stood at the back of the room, many around the double door entry way facing the rough sand lot outside. The first and second readings were now over and the ~~elderly~~ priest was telling everyone how pleased he was to be here on this beautiful island to help them celebrate the holiday Mass. His message was preparatory to the birth of Christ and he talked of Mary and Joseph at this very moment in time heading to~~wards~~ Jerusalem where the Christ child would be born. He looked across the sea of faces, mostly white except for the occasional black

faced Haitian who had stumbled into this early service out of ignorance for the special French mass to be held at 10:30, and suggested to the congregation since few if any of those listening were natives to this land, they too were 'on a pilgrimmage', perhaps like Mary and Joseph.

When she heard those words, Karen began to cry and giant tears trickled down her cheek. Up to this point Paul had stared straight ahead, lost in his own thoughts and never once looking at his wife. Karen was unfamiliar with the ritual of the Catholic church and had been unsure when to stand and when to sit at first; Paul had recognized this and he took her hand just after the service began and used pressure ~~on her hand~~ to tell her what to do next.

Instinctively he reached into his back pocket and pulled out a fresh hankerchief pressing it ~~into~~ Karen's ~~hand~~ ~~as~~ he held it tightly. He still ~~did~~ not look at her ~~and~~ she ~~took~~ the hankerchief ~~and~~ dabbed away the tears ~~that were~~ now falling freely. Standing at the rear so another could be seated, Polly Conner noticed Karen dabbing her face and after studying the couple for a moment correctly deduced that Karen was carrying a large burden. And that deduction she filed away in her mind, certain it too would prove to be useful in the future.

At the end of the service the Priest placed himself at the door to speak with each parishner as they left the church. As the forward ~~chair~~ rows emptied Jill busied herself straightening the chairs and picking up the English language handouts placed on each ~~chair~~ before the service. She noticed the Montasos were not moving towards the door with the rest and called to Anthony and Bart.

"Do you boys want to assist me? We need to pick up these handouts, straighten the chairs, and then pass out ~~the~~ yellow sheets at the back of

the church." The yellow sheets were in French as in less than 15 minutes the room would be ~~filled~~ again filled, this time with French speaking Haitians who lived on the island.

Both agreed in an instant and Paul decided helping out would be better than standing there shuffling from foot to foot wondering what to do next. Camille and her Mom sat down to wait for the cue to leave with Jill.

Paul and the boys quickly had the re-arrangement task well underway ~~and~~ Polly Conner excused herself from her position at the back of the Church next to the priest and walked towards Jill. When Jill saw Polly coming, she took a deep breath and started counting to 10. She had reached 8 when Polly was close enough to speak.

"Jill, can we talk for a moment?" she asked. Jill dreaded the inquisition she knew was coming and she beckoned to Polly to follow her into the Priest's quarters at the rear of the church hall.

"I know what you want to ask me" Jill began "and I can honestly say I don't know the answer!". Polly smiled to herself because Jill was such a defensive person around her. She knew just how to get Jill to blurt out things a more controlled person would never tell her.

"Why Jill, I can't imagine what you can be referring to". Jill was totally unprepared for "The church looks so nice today, you did a wonderful job with those flowers. I wanted you to know how much the Church board appreciates your devotion."

Jill was so relieved at what she heard that she immediately opened up like a faucet that had lost its pepcock.

"Oh Polly, yesterday was such a hectic day. I had three families come back to their homes and I needed help getting them from the airport. And I

found these flowers in the yard at the Thompson house and before I knew it I had cut more than I needed for the Thompsons and I thought, well, why not, I'll just take them to the church rather than waste them and ...."

Polly reached out to squeeze Jill's hand. Her next statement was a calculated gamble but she knew it was going to pay off before she even finished it.

"And then you had the five Monastos show up and you didn't expect them and before you knew it...".

Jill never let her finish. "And before I knew it they were all staying at my house because they had no place else to stay. Patty practically insisted they stay with me and I barely even know them. Now they are there, and I don't know what to do next."

Polly listened carefully as Jill told her the entire story, including the mysterious FAX messages.

"Surely you can see how it must appear to Paul and his family, however" she said to Jill; just to be sure that Jill understood that if this did happen as Jill said, it still looked bad for Jill.

"Of course I do; that's why I allowed Patty to talk me into putting them up for the night. But I have my own guests coming tomorrow; they can't stay with me until January 3rd." Jill almost added they couldn't stay even if she would like the money they could be charged, but at this point there seemed no correct way to bring up charging the Monastos.

"Can you put up with them for the rest of today; until tomorrow morning if necessary? I think I might have an answer but I need a few hours to work it out."

Instantly Jill totally relaxed. Her deep sigh told Polly all she really

~~wanted~~ to know. "Yes of course I can! I mean that would be fantastic. You are a real friend" and she did something she had never done before. She reached out to caress Polly's hand and kiss her on the cheek.

Jill rounded up the Montasos and no sooner had she walked them to her car then she started telling them of Polly Conner's promise to help. It was obvious to Paul and Karen a big load had been removed from Jill's mind but both wondered why this frightening lady had taken an interest in their welfare.

"Is this the sort of thing she often does" quizzed Paul; "I mean, she told me to call her if I needed anything and even suggested she might help me with my permits and stuff if I needed help. She hardly knows us...".

Jill wanted to tell Paul her own version of the real truth about Polly Conner but thought better of it. Afterall, if she said what she was thinking, Paul and Karen might not allow Polly to help out. So she carefully chose her words, certain that at some point they would be repeated by either Paul or Karen to an inquiring Polly Conner.

"Well, there is no person on this island you could better choose to be your benefactor. If there is a solution to be found to a difficult problem, Pauline Conner will find it". She didn't add 'especially if that solution somehow benefits Pauline Conner'. "Now, suppose I show you all how to get to the beach and you leave me alone for a couple of hours to throw together one of my famous bar-b-que dinners?"

"Oh boy" shouted Camille "this REALLY is going to be a perfect Christmas. Can you imagine my friends at home when I tell them I went to the beach swimming two days before Christmas!"

end-

Chapter Five

Portobello's Catholic church held services only two Sundays a month; sharing the visiting priest with a similar outpost on Grand Turk, the nation's capital island. Normally Polly would have gone directly from church to the travel agency to spend several hours looking over its' internal operations. Because tourism knew no holidays, ~~Polly~~ She had a small staff working even on Sundays. Today however she opted for the security of her own office at home on Grace Bay Beach. The Sunday staff at her office knew to expect her, and they had begun to be concerned when she didn't show up. Finally one decided to call her at home to see if she was going to drop by. The phone was ringing as Polly entered.

"Pauline Conner" she said tersely.

"This is Gabriel, Mrs. Conner. We were wondering if we should expect you here this morning?".

"No, not this morning. Perhaps this afternoon". She really had no intention of dropping by in the afternoon either, but she didn't want the staff to relax. If they thought she might drop by, they would be more attentive to what was happening throughout the day.

"Is there something you need, now?" she asked. The emphasis was on the 'now' and Gabriel fully understood that he was not to trouble her with the hundred and one details she would want to know about at another time. She had been out of the office for nearly a week and this happened so seldom there was a mixture of 'we can do it by ourselves' pride and fear that they could not, in his mind.

"No, everything is under control" he reported. "If we need anything special, we will call you at home". Polly replaced the phone on the cradle.

Then she went to a file cabinet to place her church related paperwork away and glanced at her watch. "Almost 11" she said to the empty room. One of her three pedigreed cats stiffled a yawn in her leather chair. "Avery should be home now; down you go Lilac" she announced picking up the lilac point light tan animal and setting her on the floor at her feet.

Avery's private, unlisted telephone number was in the #1 memory position on her yellow telephone. She opted to use the handset. A very deep, slightly accented male voice answered.

"Burgess here".

Avery Watson Burgess had taken an instant liking to Bill Conner when they first met in 1979. Burgess was a native islander born on the neighboring backwater island of North Caicos. He had left the islands in his late teens to learn a trade, and finally had ended up in Jacksonville, Florida where his skills as an air conditioning and cooler mechanic drew him to the merchant marine field. He was the perfect self made man; with a nest egg of no more than 20,000 very hard earned American dollars Burgess had returned to his islands in 1972 to enter the fish packing and export business.

Today 'AW', as his closest friends addressed him, had a net worth even he failed to properly access. Barclays Bank, the nation's largest, routinely loaned him as much as ten million dollars for site drafts and to short term finance his extensive food, fuel, auto and household import businesses. And he usually kept that much or more on deposit in their bank to finance his real estate and other dealings. Nobody, not even Avery, knew how much land he owned but even the most conservative estimates valued it at well over two hundred million US dollars. On a scale of comparative wealth, AW was at least 100 times more wealthy than the closest native rival and his

influence in political and business circles was unmatched. Because of this, Avery Watson Burgess was a 'marked man' living a lonely, almost secluded lifestyle.

"God bless you, Avery; this is Pauline".

Laughing a deep, throaty laugh because of the telephone blessing, Avery knew Pauline's voice as well as he knew that of his own wife.

"God bless you my child ... and welcome home. How was your trip?"

Polly paused, briefly, and then told him how hard it had been to do Christmas shopping alone; how much she missed her annual shopping trips with Bill.

"Of course there will never be another Bill" Avery started "but you really must consider taking a man again. It is not good for a wholesome lady such as yourself to continue to live alone". Avery and Polly both knew ~~that~~ Polly was only alone when she wanted to be alone; her list of 'midnight suitors' was legendary, although only descreetly known within a small inner circle of island society. Polly also knew this is not what Avery had in mind; twice in the past year ~~Avery~~ Portobello's most prominent businessman had attempted to put Polly with seriously wealthy potential island investors. Avery ~~figured~~ calculated if he could get ~~Polly~~ her married to someone with really big dollars, it wouldn't be very long before ~~Polly~~ Polly would be managing her new husband's affairs. Then, if the dollars were large enough, Avery would have an inside track on building his much dreamed about 100 million dollar deep water port facility for Portobello. He never revealed this plan to anyone; not even Polly. But it was never very far from the surface of his mind, either.

"Do you have a new 'prospect'" teased Polly?

"No, there are very few men I would deem adequate for you, my dear. But I

never tire of the search. At least one of us is looking!" he teased back.

"Avery, I have a mystery and I know how you like a mystery.", The truth was they both liked mysteries and often they would share confidences and then race with one another to unravel the truth. behind the mystery. The first to call the other with the 'solution' was the winner. Neither kept score, but both knew Avery was the clear leader in their little ongoing contest.

Polly proceeded to tell Avery of the Monastos. She skipped the section dealing with the FAX and concentrated on Paul's unknown benefactor. That was what intrigued her first of all.

"So Avery, who on this island needs Paul Montaso's skills and who might have gone to government for the residency and business permits?"

Avery paused several seconds. Polly knew his very bright mind was rolladexing through all of the native and probably the ex-pat builders as well.

"It doesn't have to be a native" he suggested. "Did he give you any clue at all?"

"None; but he clearly was upset when I mentioned the problems with permits and I think he felt I had pinned him to the floor before the referee started the match".

He laughed again. He delighted in Pauline. Very few of her close friends refused to call her Polly. In Avery's mind, Pauline was a much more appropriate name for this clever lady. He also enjoyed her oblique reference to the art of wrestling since he, along with every other native, had an intense, almost religious, interest in televised wrestling.

"To be honest, if he is any good, every builder here would need him. I

could use him in the new shopping center, for example. But I assure you I have heard no rumblings about his coming until now. It is strange that both you and I, missed this one. What does that say about our abilities"?

Avery had ears and eyes planted throughout the community. He deferred to Pauline's abilities to gather information on tourists but when it came to residents, he was unmatched.

"I am disappointed you know nothing. But to be frank with you, it is not Paul I am interested in; it is Karen; his wife".

Avery was caught by surprise. Polly had failed to explain about Karen's broadcasting career and she did so now.

"Well, you know how much I hope you will soon find somebody for those stations. I actually pray that you do when I retire each night!"

Polly knew this was a gentle reminder about the several times in the past year when her radio station's newscasts had broadcast stories that upset Avery. In each case she had been able to shift the blame to the incompetent station manager but she also knew Avery's patience might one day wear thin with these embarassing episodes. The last thing in the world she wanted was to anger AW. Despite the fact Avery was black and barely ten years older than she, he was the nearest thing she had to a father-figure in her life since her own dad had died 15 years ago.

"Can you unravel this mystery, today?" she asked. "If I think there is something worthwhile here I'll find them a place to live and go from there. If on the other hand this Monasto guy did his homework improperly and he is going to be leaving with about as much notice as we got on his arrival, I don't wish to waste my time."

"It is Sunday and running down those Grand Turk bureaucrats today could

take a while. Give me an hour and I will call you back."

"God bless, Avery". And the telephone went dead.

While she had been on the telephone, Polly had been aware that just outside her beachview window her trusted Haitian gardiner, Arnold, was marching back and forth. Arnold knew never to bother 'Miss Polly' when she was on the telephone. So he had worked out a ploy; when he needed to speak with her, he would simply walk back and forth in front of her window until she could fit him into her busy life. She got up and headed for the hallway and the outside beachfront door.

When Bill Conner settled on Portobello in 1979 with his then wife Suzanna and their two children, there were maybe ten people from Haiti on the island. Haiti is only 90 miles by air to the south of Portobello and in those 11 years since Bill landed here, many thousands of Haitians had landed as well; by both water and air. They were a mixed blessing.

Nobody accurately knew Portobello's population these days; even the 1990 government census had failed miserably to enroll most of the Haitians. And that was understandable since very few of them had the appropriate work or residency permits. For many years the government immigration personnel had conducted token sweeps against these people but unofficial-'Official' policy was 'Let them in, keep an eye on them, and if they cause any problems, ship them out'.

The Haitians were faced with the same problem every other poverty striken group had faced from time eternal. First, they were in a country because they could do better here than at home. Second, they knew they were here against the official government policy and this put them at the mercy of those who might employ them. But earning $40 American a week here was far

better than possibly earning 40 cents Haitian a day in their native land. The clustered together in tin sided shacks and plywood packing crates often sleeping twelve to fifteen people to a room barely large enough for a single cot-bed. Their shanties had no bathrooms, no water, and only the occasional lightbulb when they had been able to run an electrical extension cord through the bush from a real house in the vicinity.

They lived on the fringes of all three native villages; Five Cays, The Bight and Blue Hills. Native entrepreneurs had learned to be Caribbean 'slum-landlords' and many hundreds of plywood and packing crate houses had been built to house the Haitians. The natives didn't really care how many people crammed into one of these rentable shanties; as long as they got their $40 to $50 per week per shanty. A shanty which Haitian labour could put up in two days at a cost of $300 rented as fast as it was finished for $50 per week. So many natives were enjoying this additional income they formed a power block with government to keep the immigration goon squad from causing too many problems with deportations.

Within government, the rapidly growing health department bureaucracy and the British administered police department were left to cope with the thousands of illegal emigrees. Because of the crowded, unsanitary living conditions, and the island's partial reliance on well water, the health department fought a continual battle to keep sewage out of the drinking water. The British administered medical clinic got all of the Haitian health problems because it charged no fee, or a very token fee, for a visit. With several private doctors, and a privately run foundation clinic for the balance of the island residents, the Blue Hills Government Clinic was the front line defense force against the intrusion of Haitian bred and spread

disease.

~~Officially~~, the islands had a mesasureable but not significant AIDS problem. The Minister of Health played many games with the official end-of-year statistics and it had been Bill Conner who noticed in the last year he lived how the end of year report of 'AIDS cases' ~~quoted~~ precisely the same number of cases for the year as there had been AIDS-blamed deaths for the year. Conner had questioned this similarity in a radio editorial and ~~this had~~ led to the revelation ~~that~~ the Chief Medical Officer had his own way of counting people with AIDS. He had explained to the local newspaper "How can you be certain of an AIDS diagnosis, until the person has died? We only count those who die." ~~Officially, then~~, the Turks and Caicos had a very low AIDS incident rate, since the 'walking wounded' were not considered to be 'victims of AIDS' as long as they continued to live. In the most recent years, after ~~the revelation forced by~~ Conner's radio editorial, a new policy had evolved. If someone with AIDS was likely to expire, and they were not a Turks and Caicos Islander, they were deported by immigration; usually to their country of origin. If a Turks and Caicos Islander had the disease, and death was near, the government tried to ship them out to the Bahamas, explaining 'care is better there'. In that way, those who did not die in the islands did not have to be entered into the Chief Medical Officer's annual statistics.

The truth of AIDS was far less clinically perfect. World Health Organization studies reported one person in 4, 25% of all men, women and children in Haiti carried the AIDS virus. Unless you foolishly believed those with AIDS stayed home and only those without AIDS fled to the Turks and Caicos, that suggested to many that at least a quarter of the Haitians

living on Portobello were AIDS carriers. Even the most optimistic government stuidied admitted there were more than 3,000 Haitians in the country. Or 750 carriers of AIDS in that segment alone.

Polly Conner was a walking encylopedia of disease threats. She knew these numbers and she worried, alot, about what might ultimately happen to her tiny, adopted country. When the 1990 end-of-year report would be issued, she like many others would be shocked to learn that inspite of the government containment and ship out policies, the country had recorded more than 70 AIDS deaths in the most recent year. AIDS was a direct threat to Polly, personally, because she was not always as careful as she might be.

Arnold Touressant had been the Conner's gardiner for six years. He had his work permit and he had a blood test to reveal the presence of AIDS each year. Polly Conner now saw to that. Arnold lived in a one room shanty in The Bight, the native village nearest to the Conner home and he rode a small Honda motorscooter back and forth to work six days each week. He had Saturdays off.

Arnold earned $150 per week. He was paid as much as any Haitian gardner on the island but even if he could have earned more elsewhere, he would never leave 'Miss Polly'. He was provided with a motorbike, a TV set and free cable for his shanty home. 'Miss Polly' paid his medical expenses, sending him to the private clinic, and his annual permit fees. To Arnold, working for 'Miss Polly' would be a job for as long as he lived on Portobello; all his life if possible. When she had first arrived, he had called her 'Mommy' as most Haitians still called their female employers. It was a particular expression of family ties important to the Haitians. He called Bill 'Daddy' but she had put a stop to that and coached Arnold and

the maid to properly address them as 'Mr. Bill' and 'Miss Polly'.

And he lived frugally, sending home as much as $100 each week to Haiti to support his wife and three children there. On the average of once each year Arnold would approach Miss Polly to ask for a loan; an advance really. He had borrowed as much as $2,000 at a time from her and she deducted just that amount, $75 ~~each~~ per week, from his pay to repay the loan. She had never charged Arnold interest and with that money he had one year added two rooms to his home in Haiti, another year paid for emergency medical care his oldest son needed, and in the most recent year his wife had undergone surgery in Haiti.

"Miss Polly, come. I show you". Polly followed the thin man around the corner of the house to a flower bed. "See? Not good!". He was pointing to a bed of Azaleas planted with seeds Polly had supplied from a stateside trip.

"What are those bugs, Arnold?"

"Not good; plenty problem. I no have ..." and he forgot the word for insecticide spray so he improvised with his hands and his mouth.

"See?" he asked pushing his hand in and out to simulate a sprayer being pumped up and following this with a "pfooosh" from his mouth.

Polly could not help laughing. Arnold often amused her because he was so intent on every aspect of his job. The flowers had a few bugs, to be sure, but they were probably in no danger of being eaten alive. Still, she always deferred to Arnold on matters relating to gardening.

"Arnold, I will get you spray tomorrow. For right now, get down on your knees", and she dropped down by bending her own knees to illustrate, "and pick them off with your hand. Then put them in gasoline. You do understand?"

" Oh yes, yes. I understand. No problem" and he broke into a wide, toothy smile. It was always a mystery to Polly why Haitians had such excellent

teeth when she knew they had no real dental care, and sucked on sugar cane by the hour. Her maid had been observed to use as much as a full cup of sugar in a simple loaf of bread.

The crisis resolved, Polly thanked Arnold for bringing it to her attention and went to her bedroom to change out of her church attire. She glanced at a clock and whistled lowly to herself. Almost noon and she had five people arriving on the 2:30 Pan American flight. She would have to get things organized. From her closet she brought out more than a dozen mostly unwrapped gifts for her guests. The German nutcracker was in the pile. From another closet she brought out boxes of ribbon, bows and rolls of Christmas paper.

Polly greatly enjoyed wrapping presents. It was quite the opposite of a chore to her. Each present had been individually selected, many months before on her short trips to the states. She knew by mid-July those to be there for Christmas and in the event plans might change she had a drawer filled with generic presents and cards. She was more than half way done with the wrapping when one of her bedroom extension phones rang. The light told her it was the yellow phone; a special line used only by a few close business associates.

"Pauline Conner" she spoke into the instrument.

"Avery. Part of the mystery is solved. Do you want to take notes?" Polly knew this indicated facts and some figures would follow.

"Bless you; of course, go ahead" selecting a sharpened pencil from the holder next to her telephones.

"Paul Robert Montaso is a white Canadian male 38 years of age. Karen Ellen Monasto is a white Canadian with one American parent 36 years of age.

I'll skip the details on their four children...".

Polly broke in. "Four, there are only three here..."

"I'm told there are four; well, ~~Karen~~ Paul has four children. Actually I did not learn she and Paul had four. Going on ... Paul applied for a work permit September 15, 1990. His lawyer is Charles Scott; we both can guess what that means. The application was initially denied and then a letter was filed through Scott signed by Lawrence Harvey, our illustrious Minister of Natural Resources. On the strength of ~~the~~ this letter, the work permit was issued, but I cannot obtain a FAX copy of the letter until offices reopen tomorrow."

Avery paused to allow Polly's note taking to catch up.

"Is that it?" she asked.

"Almost, but not quite. There is a hold on his medical approval. It may be a technicality but for some reason the work permit is approved with a condition that his medical tests are satisfactory. For some reason the blood tests did not satisfy them. There is probably nothing to that; we both know how unfortunate the skills of the Chief Medical Officer's office are these days."

"That is all useful Avery, but where does that leave us? We can't really tell who his business partner is, can we? What about a business license?"

"No business license, granted nor on application. That means he is probably going in with someone who is already in business. I disagree we have no clue; the letter that turned his work permit came from Larry Harvey. I think that's a clue."

"Because...?"

"Larry has the contract to complete the new government low cost housing, as you know. He is virtually finished with that work and from what you

suggest about Monasto his work skills are too good for interior finishings in low cost government housing. Consider, however, what Harvey is going to do with that hanger he has rented at the airport where they turn out those pre-fab walls and rooms. In another two, make that three, weeks they will be out of work. Supposen Harvey wants to put our Canadian in there to produce kitchen cabinets, vanitys and the like for the housing market? It is not a bad idea, even if I do suggest it myself. I wish I had thought of this, actually."

"Assuming you are right. If you are wrong, then you still thought of it, first!"

Avery laughed his deep, ~~rolling~~ laugh again. "You certainly know how to butter up an old man, Pauline. I hope this helps; tomorrow morning I'll check out the recent filings on mortgaged property. Larry Harvey is no fool and if he is going into the cabinet business, he has financed a bunch of equipment and whoever sold it to him will have the mortgages on file. I'll let you know what I find out. Is there anything else I can help with?"

"You have been a big help. Actually, there is. I might be able to handle finding them a place to live on my own, but I should at least ask you if you have any suggestions. I have never seen the island this tight...".

"Didn't you say until January 5th?"

"I believe it is until the 3rd and then Jill Murphy says they can move into the Whitebourn house."

"Just a minute; this darned computer is too fancy for an old man...OK, I have it. We have a unit at Golden Shores I can make available by noon tomorrow. Let's see...two bedrooms, kitchen and all of the amenities".

"And the price?"

"Who's going to pay for it?"

"The Monastos of course."

"Just checking. Can you think of any good reason I should extend them a discount?"

"If you are asking if I want them to have a discount, the answer is no, not at this time. They are just an interesting couple, to me, for now".

"Right. Tell you what, tell them $80 a day which is far below market. But you have to promise me something."

"What's that". She knew this was the bottom line coming.

"I want Paul. I could use him in the shopping center. But we have to be careful not to get under the skin of Larry Harvey."

"A deal. Provided I get ~~the lady~~ Lady; Karen. OK?"

"Done. Merry Christmas Polly".

Spoils divided.

Polly stood up from her satin covered bedspread and smiled. The hall clock, Bill's from his Dad, was striking bells signifying it was 2 PM. Polly grabbed her waist bag and headed for her car. Pan American waited for no-one. Not even Polly Conner.

-end-

Chpt. Six

According to local newspaper publisher, Benjamin Dornfield, the last year a Christmas morning dawned to a cloudy or overcast sky was 1953. Dornfield published statements like this to re-enforce his instant grasp of the country's history. In truth, Dornfield had grown up as a Turks and Caicos Islander away from home. His parents had immigrated, along with thousands of others, to the Bahamas in the 50's. The native government had been trying, with small successes, to lure its native-born back for nearly a decade. For every Turks and Caicos Islander alive in the islands proper, there were 3 someplace else, and more than half of those were in the Bahamas.

Dornfield was 40 years old; he had been 'home' since 1984. He learned what little he knew about journalism by working first as a copy boy and then as a field reporter for the Nassau Guardian. His Bahamian journalistic career was undistinguished and he had returned to 'the islands' mostly out of hatred for the Bahamians.

Dornfield's pre-Christmas issue of his weekly Turks and Caicos Times had forecast a bright, sunny day for Christmas. Each year he repeated the story that the last not bright and sunny Christmas had been in 1953; and nobody had the records to challenge his fantasy.

Actually the weather in the islands was exceedingly predictable. There is a wet season, mid-May to Mid-July, a second wet season from mid-October to mid-November. And there is sunshine; virtually all the rest of the year. And two unknowns: Hurricanes in the late summer, and northwesterlies in the months of January and February. Northwesterlies are the tail end of North American cold fronts. They turned the winds around, from the trade easterlies to the northwest, for a few hours, or a day at most; and they

also produced a non-wet cloud cover. The hurricane season was over; and Dornfield, if he actually thought about such things, was betting no early northwesterlies would appear over the holidays. Once again his record was intact; it was a picture-postcard perfect day in his Caribbean. The winter sun would warm the miles of pure white, fine sand beach to 85 degrees by mid-day and artistic white scattered puffy clouds would float lazily from east to west across the country in the afternoon.

Camille Monasto awoke first. She was sharing the bedroom with her younger brother Bart; Tony was asleep on the couch in the living room and her mom and dad had the other bedroom. The family had moved into the luxury beach house barely 200 feet from the crystal clear, aqua-marine waters of Grace Bay at 12 noon sharp the previous day. Now, they were all in paradise! The entire family had gone grocery shopping in the car they borrowed from that nice older black man Mr. Burgess, Monday afternoon, and her mom and dad had walked alone on the beach for hours while she and her brothers had frolicked in the calm waters. Mr. Burgess had told them there was nothing, absolutely nothing, to be afraid of in the water except he had cautioned, "Do not step on the sharp coral reefs under the water; they can cut your feet." Then he had asked, "you do have snorkel masks and fins?." When he found out they did not, he sent them to the man he called the yard boy to locate some sets. Her mommy and daddy were the happiest she had ever seen them that afternoon and evening. And that made Camille and her brothers just as happy inside.

"Bart, Bart...get up!" she commanded, shaking her brother's arm as it dangled over the edge of the bed. "Bart, let's go swimming, now!" she cried. Bart's arm shot upward in defense and he opened his eyes with a start. It took him a minute to focus on where he was. "What?" he yawned, "go

swimming???". Then he remembered where he was. And, what day it was!

"What about Christmas?" he shouted. "Let's get mom and dad and open our presents first!" Camille had completely forgotten about Christmas when she first awoke. The beach lined with palm trees and the bright yellow sun were about as far removed from her idea of Christmas as any scene could be. But now she remembered too and she yanked up her brother's hand with a "Come on, let's get mom and dad!".

The prior evening, after tucking the two smaller children in for the night, Karen and Paul, assisted by the oldest, Tony, had unpacked one of their boxes into which Karen had carefully placed selected ornaments and Christmas decorations from their past life in Canada. Each child had a favorite ornament and Camille had a nativity scene she was strangely attracted to. Each was unwrapped lovingly from the protective bubble wrap and then Karen had unfolded a tissue paper Douglas Fir tree and taped it to the sliding glass doors leading to the beach. With tape and pins, all carefully packed into the box, she created a Christmas scene.

The last newspaper wrapped package in the box had been a surprise even to Paul. Inside were the family Christmas stockings which she had saved despite Paul's urging to throw them out. Then she sent Paul to the bedroom and asked Tony to turn away as she went through her own suitcase to locate the special stocking stuffer presents she had been hoarding for two months.

rough change here from past to present

what?

Tony, awakened by the commotion from his parent's bedroom sat up to the picture of the family's paper tree blocking his view of the palm tree lined beach beyond the sliding doors. From the yelling and screaming he knew his mom would pop around the corner quickly, probably followed by his father. Scooping up his pillow and cotton blanket, he dashed for the single bathroom

covering himself with it or wrapping it around himself?

to pull on some shorts and a T shirt.

— 8 yr old says this — How ad "HURRY UP!"

Karen passed him on his dash. "Good morning and merry Christmas, Tony" she said reaching to plant a kiss on his pre-teen forehead. But he was too fast for her and slid by at breakneck speed closing the door behind himself.

Karen smiled to herself and surveyed the Christmas scene. Paul, struggling to pull on his own shorts, came up behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist from behind her.

"Not bad for a couple of Italian Canuks in Paradise" he said lovingly, reaching his right hand through her drawn robe to rub her left breast. "What say you and I amble down the lovely beach and find a lonely patch of sand?" Karen took a deep breath and twisted in his grasp to face her husband. Paul knew the manuever and he never lost contact with her breast or the nipple which was growing progressively harder as he caressed it lightly. The robe, however, had lost its tie and Karen, now naked in front, was exposed to Paul's bare chest. She could not help herself; this crazy Italian with so many personal faults had to be one of the most caring lovers in the world. She was victimized by his touch the first time they met some 16 years before. He still had the same effect on her.

They kissed long and deep and Karen could feel herself subcumbing to his rapidly moving tongue now buried inside of her mouth, when reality struck.

"Mommy, mommy...can we come out yet?" shrieked Camille.

"Yeh, can we come yet?" added Bart.

Karen used both hands to push Paul away and then rewrapped the robe and afixed the tie at her waist. "I guess 'coming yet' is a priority around here right now," she teased Paul. "Come on, we have three, well two anyhow, anxious siblings to deal with. Let's do Christmas first and then I'll give

you a special present later; down on the beach," and she winked at her grinning husband.

The Grace Bay white sandy beach covers approximately a third of the north shore line of Portobello, all at the east end. No natives had ever built along this sandy shoreline because in decades and eons past the infrequent hurricanes that struck this island always ripped this shoreline to shreds. The natives, dependent upon the sea for their hand to mouth existence, had built the three native villages back away from the shorelines on ground high enough to escape the high hurricane tides that always came with each storm. A few of the stone and mortar homes built in the mid 1800s by the earliest blacks to arrive on the island still stood on these ridges; proof that even without modern equipment and materials, the natives knew how to protect themselves from nature.

The white developers saw the 7 mile long Grace Bay beach with quite different eyes. This was the last, totally undeveloped, major stretch of white sand in the northern or western Caribbean. At least they thought so. So when the developers had arranged to trade a promise to build a seaport, an airport, and roads on Portobello in exchange for 4,000 acres of government owned land, they had asked for and received every inch of the 7 mile beach as well as the property for almost one half mile behind the beach. There had been a few problems between the government in Grand Turk and the natives of Portobello over this land grant to the developers, of course. The British land registry system allowed natives who had lived on or farmed parcels of land for two generations or more to take that land in their own names. To be sure, from time to time in the past, there had been brief occupation or use of some of the land which 'the Crown' wanted to deed

to developers. All of this came to a head a few years before the actual developers had appeared on Portobello. Until the early 60's, the Portobello natives had been as remote from the government in Grand Turk as the Alaskan natives were from Washington. The government ignored the most western, isolated, island in the chain as best they could; and the Portobello natives reciprocated by ignoring those who lived 'east of the bouy'; in Grand Turk.

But Grand Turk was as anxious to find a developer for Portbello as the white developers would ultimately be to have the island. So the British had decided to 'tidy up' the land records on the island in 1961 in preparation for what they hoped would one day become a development program.

Gustave Cornelius Harvey counted cousins throughout the island chain. One of his cousins was Lawrence Harvey, the present Minister of Natural Resources. Gus didn't think a great deal about his bloodlines shared with the Minister because in a small country where travel had been difficult for every generation but the present one, almost everyone was related to everyone else at least at the cousin level. Gus was the first Portobello resident to ever be named to the British government's token 'Council'. To ease the creation of a land registry system in the islands, the Brits decided to create a council made up of one native from each island. By appointment, Gus had represented his island while the white British land surveyors, sent out from Whitehall in London, mapped every inch of his island. Using these maps, British civil servants then entered into one-on-one negotiations with every family head on the island. These had been very difficult times for a man who lacked writing and math skills. On the one hand, he had to explain what was happening to his fellow islanders, and make them accept the inevitable. On the other hand he was proud, so very proud,

to be the first Portobello native to actually be invited to sit in the halls of government.

A few of the natives figured out that if they protested loudly, they would end up with more land. So they complained about land parcels which might not have actually been farmed and to silence their protests and to get on with the registry program the Brits had given in on numerous parcels.

Additionally, there were those islanders who were now gone; typically to the Bahamas. The Brits had published a notice in the Nassau Guardian every week for two years advising Turks and Caicos Islanders living there to contact the government in Grand Turk if they had land in the islands which they believed they owned. Many, at the time, did not understand the significance of the announcement and so many parcels of land that might have qualified for a native owner had ultimately gone 'back to the Crown'. And then, in some cases, to the white developers.

On Christmas morning 1990, Gustave Cornelius Harvey awoke to find a man sitting in his living room. It was 5:30 AM and Gus did not recognize this man, whom he judged to be in his 30's.

"I cousin Samuel; my daddy your daddy's brother" the man had said. "I borne Nassau and I come home".

As Gus was becoming acquainted with his new cousin, Lisa was scrambling around their modest kitchen preparing food to go to their son Tom's home. Lisa Harvey was also Gus's first cousin but that had not stopped them from becoming man and wife 40 years earlier. In their community, at the time, the only person you didn't marry was your sister or brother.

"Gus, I want daddy's land" Samuel was explaining. "He farmed north but I no know where. You help me?". A sharp pain went through Gus's

chest; all of the ugliness and heartache of that terrible two years in the early 60's came flooding back on him.

He chose his words with care.

"North? I don't remember where your daddy farm. You sure?"

"Yes, sure. Daddy tell me he farm by Bight, near beach. He have well on farm. People at Bight use his water".

Gus tried to imagine where that would be. The oldest well on Portobello was half way between The Bight village and the beach front. This was land where the Sheraton hotel chain was now building a 200 room hotel and casino. Government had recently closed the well because Sheraton was complaining about the natives, actually Haitians now, who were always coming into their private property to fetch pails of water.

"When your daddy leave?" asked Gus, testing the man's memory.

"Before I borne. I 35. What that be?".

Although Gus had begun to learn to count with beer bottles as a guide, and for many years any number bigger than 100 was a hurdle, his stint with the 'council' and those years in the 60's had taught him to use a calendar. He had faced many problems like this when he served on council and the question of when land was abandoned had always been an important one in determining if a family's legal right to property had expired.

"This 1990" Gus said, slowly. "So that be" and he turned to his bible with a 50 year calendar taped onto the back cover. His finger started at 1990 and he counted backwards. A smile came to his face. "That be 1955, or before."

"Why you ask this?" Samuel said. "Daddy dead. I only son. This land mine".

"Maybe" replied Gus cautiously. "You let me check this. You have more

family here?"

"Big family. You know, you same family!" the man said proudly. "You find out, today?"

"No, not today. This Christmas. Not tomorrow. You come back one week and I help you." Actually Gus already knew the answer but this was no business for a Christmas morning. Even if Sam's daddy did once farm this now-hotel land, and if Sam's grandfather also farmed this land, by missing the Nassau Guardian announcement in the 60's, they lost their rights. Then it occured to him that Samuel's grandfather was also his grandfather. As he bid Samuel good day and 'God Bless' Lisa appeared carrying a tray filled several layers past the safe point with heavily fried chicken, fish and dozens of plantains. "I am ready," she declared. "You bring presents." and they walked out of their 80-year-old house Gus had inherited from his own father and made a sharp turn to the left. There, less than 100 feet away, was the home of his son, Tom, where their two grandchildren were anxiously waiting for them to appear so Christmas could begin. It was 7 AM.

The Burgess family straddled two cultures. Avery and his wife, Velma, had both been born on the island of North Caicos. Today, North Caicos was described as the 'garden spot' of the Turks and Caicos. The literature said North Caicos has the best soil and the rainfall pattern condusive to growing vegtables and fruit. To be sure, in the 40s and 50s, North Caicos had grown so many vegtables that a short lived canning plant located on South Caicos had canned and exported North Caicos peas, beans and corn. Avery Burgess was born in Kew, a small faming village, in 1934. Velma was born in Kew 1936. Both were members of relatively small families; unusual since the typical North Caicos family had 8 children.

Avery's past, before he voluntarily elected to go to the United States for technical training in 1960, was largely unrecorded. He served in the native staffed police department, in the capital of Grand Turk. He fished and he cultivated the family produce garden.

Velma was more sure of her own future and more vocal about it. By the time she was 20, Velma had managed to find her way into a rare opportunity; she was sent to Jamaica for a three year course in nursing. When she returned to the islands, the British government pressed her into a mid-wife position first on rural Portobello, later on her home island. Velma was energetic, out-spoken and for a Turks and Caicos woman in the 50's, a radical. Avery was attracted to her because he knew this woman was going someplace. But he didn't quite know where. Her education fascinated him, and when they courted she encouraged Avery to read and study; anything that interested him. "Being a policeman is not bad," she would say, "But there are many more opportunities to help our people if you have resources."

Avery and Velma would marry and shortly thereafter Avery would find an opportunity to go as a green card worker to the United States. There he learned a trade and once schooled in the mechanics of cooling systems and air conditioning, he found work with the United States merchant marine. Velma would enroll in more advanced medical training and at the same time she began to take optional courses in business administration. The Burgesses had a plan. Nobody outside of the two knew how close they came to not returning to their homeland.

The couple, childless by decision, were slowly saving money. Both worked, both contributed at least a quarter of their pay to a growing savings account. One day Avery came home from a merchhant marine trip to Europe to

tell Velma some very exciting news.

'How long have we been in the United States?' he asked, already sure of the answer. Velma computed.

'5 years, two months, and 15 days'. Avery was beaming.

'Do you know' he began' we can now qualify to become U.S. citizens?'

It was the dream of every alien, including each Turks and Caicos Islander. And so they had grasped that opportunity and without telling a soul, not even their own families, both Velma and Avery Burgess had become United States citizens. It was while the couple were studying their U.S. history lessons that Velma had uncovered an interesting new opportunity.

'I think there is a way for us to become citizens, and not give up our Turks and Caicos citizenship' she announced one day. There was, and when the Burgesses returned to the islands in 1972 (?/check earlier date) they had indeed returned as citizens of the islands. But tucked away in their bags were U.S. Passports as well. They now had the best, they thought, of two worlds. They returned with a US dollar nest egg, and impeccable American beliefs. Both firmly believed in the American system of free enterprise, but their roots in the Turks and Caicos were still firmly planted. These roots would serve them well.

Christmas at the Burgess household was a mixture of their two worlds. When he had turned 50, Avery Burgess had felt a calling from 'The Lord'. He had always been a religious man but until he was fifty his religion was always playing second fiddle to his free enterprise spirit. Until that magical c ~~Avery was~~ ~~50~~ ~~he~~ Avery looked upon religion as a cross between a devotion and another opportunity to make a buck. He had sent himself to many U.S. evangelical seminars hoping there he would find a place where he could 'minister', and,

too many references to 50

make a buck. But something inside of him said 'no, this is not the way to The Lord'. And so he had started and then stopped several projects which would have allowed him to follow the evangelical path to religion. There had been the plan he hatched with Bill Conner, to build a powerful shortwave radio station to preach the message of the Lord to the Caribbean. There had been his plan to build a 200 room hotel which would be leased as a package to religious groups from the United States and Canada. There had been his plan to create a small church on Portobello and then offer to 'ordain' others as ministers. While there studying under his guidance, they would, of course, rent cottages he would build for this purpose. Each plan had been formulated and Velma had 'run the numbers' on each with her ever-present desktop calculator. Then at the last minute, Avery had stopped each.

same beginning as last paragraph

Christmas 1990 at the Burgess household was the third they had spent at their palatial Grace Bay beachfront estate. Avery began building the home in 1985. It took two long years, and the design of the house and Avery's preoccupation with it and its furnishings had placed a severe strain on his marrige to Velma.

'It is the will of The Lord that I built us this home as a symbol to our Turks and Caicos Islanders of how hard work and study, and trust in The Lord, pays off' he kept saying. Velma was not so certain their fellow islanders, many still without electricity and inside toilets, would take to a 9 bedroom home with 15 bathrooms and gold plated bathroom furnishings. Avery had been like a man possessed for those two years. The house began as a five bedroom, 4 bath upscale home. Each month he changed his mind and each month the house grew. When Avery added a room or two with new plans he said came to him 'during the night, from The Lord', the native carpenters on his

staff would tear down a wall or two and restart the changed portion. It didn't take very long before those who worked for him on this project, no matter how loyal or indebted to Avery, were talking behind his back about his 'whims' and 'expensive tastes'. Long before the Spanish roofed home was completed, the native community had decided Avery had gone 'coconut'. It meant he was black on the outside but white on the inside. Since he owned the only real super market on the island, and he owned the only authorized fuel supply company, importing Shell Oil products, along with the only auto distributorship and all of the downtown buildings where banks, real estate companies and lawyers rented from him, the house was simply more proof to them that Avery Burgess had 'turned white'.

This is precisely what Velma had feared would happen. By the Christmas of 1990, the Burgesses had almost no native friends remaining. To be sure, everyone on the island always addressed them with dignity but they no longer were invited to informal native gatherings and the white community, with the exception of a few close business associates, feared them even more than the blacks.

CHPT 6 - CONTINUED

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Christmas was lavish and Avery wanted each of his three childrem, and his grandchildren, to know they were 'special people'. Avery's oldest son, Alton, was now active in the family business enterprises. Avery's oldest child, a daughter raised initially in the image of her mother, had done her best to place a distance between her paternal family and her new married family. She had married a Barbados native whom most fathers would have been proud to welcome as a son-in-law. But Celia's husband was not one to bow and scrape to Avery and this angered the senior Burgess from the day they first met. Avery had attempted to subvert his son-in-law, after he failed in a ~~bid~~

bid to break up the wedding. He tried putting the son-in-law in the air freight business; ~~a business~~ one which he did not control on the island. The son-in-law had almost bitten on that one, and then backed out when he realized that if he accepted the generous offer of backing, he would be selling out completely to his father-in-law. Celia and John were on Portobello for Christmas but they did not plan to stay long. ~~Celia had been~~ U.S.-born ~~in the United States~~; ~~she carried~~ & carrying a U.S. passport, and she and her husband would stay there, for the time being. Celia, the apple of daddy Avery's eye until she married, was now only marginally holding on as a member of the family. She had failed to live up to her daddy's plans, hopes and expectations.

The youngest Burgess son was home from bootcamp for two weeks. He had been sent first to one school and then another in the states, ~~and he failed~~ eventually fa or being expelled from ~~or was asked to leave~~ each. Finally his parents had persauded him he should join the U.S. Marine Corps. Norman aspired to be a part of the family enterprise, but he knew he had to grow up before he would be invited to do so.

Avery had a special surprise for the assembled family at the 12 noon Christmas dinner. He had, with some mystery, invited a guest to dinner. Actually two guests; a couple who had been staying at the Burgess Golden Shores beachfront facility. Since the Christmas dinner was a strictly family tradition, nobody in the family could even guess why these outsiders, white at that, were coming to dinner.

Arising, Avery picked a gold plated ice tea spoon and ~~beat~~ tapped it against the the crystal glass before him. The room immediately hushed; the family knew something important was about to be said.

"I wish to welcome to our humble dinner table Doctor and Mrs. David

McClaskey," he began. "We all know Doc and Susie; they have graced us with their presence at our beach front resort for, let's see now..."

"Four years running," the doctor filled in.

"Yes, four years. In that time we have come to know them and to count them amongst our dearest friends."

Son Alton impulsively emptied his wine glass as his father spoke. 'Dearest friends' was pouring it on a little thickly, even for his old man. 'I wonder what he has in mind for them?' he mused.

"As we all know, Doc is the coach of the University of Michigan swim team. And Susie is a special instructor for the U.S. Olympic diving team."

Velma had no idea what was coming. Avery had not the slightest interest in swimming; like most natives he lived adjacent to some of the most luxurious swimming-water in the world but seldom if ever even dipped his big toe.

Avery turned to his eldest son who was sitting to his right. Next to his son was a 6 year old girl, Alton's daughter from a mis-managed love affair that occured while Alton was in school in the states.

used in reference to Celia, too

"Little Rose here is the apple of my eye. She is the next generation of Burgesses and when she is old enough to sit in the chair Velma now occupies, Rose will be in a world we cannot even imagine today."

Alton felt a light starting to glow in his head and he reached for the filled glass of wine sitting before his daughter; a symbol of her being a part of the gathering, but certainly not intended for her to drink. He began to sip the wine.

"I have listened to Doc and Susie describe how in the United States the trully spectacular athletic achievers, those who become Olympic caliber,

always start out very young with intense training and professional handling. We all saw how Jennifer Capriati took the tennis world by storm this past year; she began playing serious tennis when, I believe, she was four?" He turned to his daughter Celia for a nod of agreement. Celia was the most athletic of the family and she was a fair mixed-doubles tennis player. Celia smiled and nodded agreement.

"Susie tells me little Rose displays remarkable coordination in diving. We all know that when Rose is here, it is impossible to keep her out of the swimming pool, and off the diving board. Susie has worked with Rose several hours each day this past week and she proposes to me that we put Rose into an intensive training program to see if she has what it takes to be an Olympic contestant. Tell us what you suggest, Susie."

Susan McClaskey had learned never to count her chickens prematurely. When she caught her husband and Avery discussing the concept of training young Rose for the 2002 Olympics she had to pinch herself to be certain she was really awake. Her masters thesis had dealt with 'super achievers'; young athletes who seemed to have special skills in their chosen fields. It had been her thesis summary that each of these mid-teen-age sports superstars had several things in common. They were all very dedicated to their sport. Each had begun serious training at a very young age and they all had parents willing to sacrifice their own lives for the child's development. As a special Olympic coach in diving, she was living out her own childhood fantasy. She had grown up with the determination to succeed, and the training from a young age. But her parents had failed in their devotion and she turned out as a mediocre diver with superb understanding of the mechanics of form diving, but not the ability to reach stardom herself.

Now this very unusual man, almost out of the main stream of the 'real world', was giving her the opportunity to take a youngster and mold that youngster as she saw fit. Avery had told her that no expense, no tool would be questioned. And he had offered she and Doc a very unusual opportunity. There was no way they could lose!

"Rose has natural balance and she will hopefully have the ideal height and size of a top-flight diver. She is a bright girl and with the help of each of you, she can develop the stamina and single-purposeness of mind to achieve our joint goal. Doc and I will create a training and development program for Rose starting immediately. She will come to live with -".

Avery interrupted her with a word.

"Stop".

"Oh yes, you should explain this part," she said sheepishly.

"Rose," he said turning to the child, "Your roots are in the Turks and Caicos Islands." That her mother was a U.S. citizen of mixed Mexican and black heritage was not a consideration. "Your father will one day be the most important businessman of his generation in this country. What I have started, Alton will carry on. I, your grandfather," and he turned towards Velma now, "and Grandma Mel, will give you the support and inspiration you will need to become the best woman diver in the world."

Turning back to Alton, he went on.

"Next week we will break ground on the five acres just behind our home" and he swept his arm towards the south, "a complex that will include a full Olympic swimming pool, diving platforms and training center. I will equip the center exactly as Susie and Doc require. Every available electronic aid to assist in evaluating and recording Rose's development

will be there." He stopped and looked over his 'family'.

"I will also build a home there for Doc and Susie, to their specifications. They will create their own schedule to be here perhaps as much as 4 months each year.

"Now, Rose," he said pointing his bulky forefinger at the silent youngster, "I am sure your father will agree that this is the most wonderful opportunity you could possibly have. And he will support this plan to the extent that you will be allowed to return to Michigan with Doc and Susie and there you will have private school tutors arranged around a schedule determined by Susie's training program."

The intensity of his 56 years bore down on his 24 year old son. Alton was certain he knew what his father wanted him to respond, but he also knew that if he guessed wrong and spoke the wrong words, his own life might never be the same again. Literally, the next sentence he spoke might well be his last as a favored Burgess. He avoided his father's glare and sat his daughter's wine glass down slowly.

He would later say he was inspired, perhaps by the stare his older sister was fixing on him. She, afterall, had faced a similar decision time when she brought John home as her financee. And she had blown it.

Alton smiled, and picked the wine glass up again as he pushed himself back from the table. He rose to face his father at the same level. Slowly he lifted the wine glass to his eye level and pointed it straight at Avery.

"I propose a toast to the first Turks and Caicos Islander to become an Olympic Gold Medal winner; Miss Rose Burgess in the year 2002!"

The entire family began clapping, even Rose who barely understood what was happening. As the clapping subsided and the room broke into a babble of

voices, Susie McClaskey reached along the starched linen tablecloth to grasp Doc's hand. He turned and looked her straight in the eye, leaned forward and kissed her lightly on the ear. "Merry Christmas...and a Happy 2002, darling".

Polly Conner had been preparing the Christmas dinner meal since mid-day on Monday. There would be ~~nine~~ 7 nine houseguests, along with Bob and Lisa deNuff, who lived on the island, and herself. Her live-in maid Lannie, a Haitian who had been with the Conner household for seven years, now knew the Christmas routine. Polly never allowed Lannie to help her with a meal unless it was a special meal. Polly was well known for entertaining in exquisite form awkward ? Small dinner parties, seldom more than a dozen people, always carefully selected to provide maximum diversity of thought and opinion. Polly did not consider herself an intellectual; although Bill had been quite a thinker. But she had learned from him how entertaining people's minds can be if properly stimulated. She delighted in bringing together individuals or couples who were as opposite as humans could be. And then she would sit back and soak up the information while watching the sparks fly.

Polly's Christmas house guests was such a diverse group. There were three couples in the group; she smiled when she thought how she had made love to each of these men and she ~~had~~ wondered which one would be the first to send his wife off on a contrived trip to some other part of the island so as to have Polly alone. None of the three knew about her affairs with the other two, of course.

~~Then there were~~ the Jacksons came from Oklahoma. Polly counted Wanda and Jim amongst her oldest, if not dearest friends. Jim had been a close business associate when Polly was married to Allen and although Allen and she seldom

contacted one another anymore, Polly stayed close to the Jacksons. With them was their 17 year old son Shawn. Polly had not seen Shawn in perhaps five years and she ~~had been~~ was pleasantly surprised to see how he had matured into a most handsome young man, with his mother's sense of irreverance for conventional life.

Before they gathered for dinner, Polly had placed small handwritten namecards at each setting on her marble top dining room table. There were) chairs but the table was still not crowded.

Bob and Lisa deNuff arrived nearly 30 minutes early. Bob explained he had a choice; arrive 15 minutes late or 30 minutes early. "If you will let me take my scotch into the den where I can join Peter Jennings and the news, I'll see you as soon as it is over" he offered. Bob never missed the ABC World News and Polly mentally pinched herself for stating an arrival time that conflicted with the newscast. She did know better!

As Bob excused himself from the kitchen and walked past Polly towards the den, he leaned towards her and said quietly so Lisa might not hear "duPont was good; $650,000" and he smiled. Polly's mind produced her 'finder's fee commission' within two seconds; $13,500. Well, that was a nice extra Christmas present!

Lisa sipped on a diet Coke and spoke about her grandchildren as Polly busied herself with the finishing touches on the hor derves (spelling) tray. Lannie, try as she might, could never get the presentation part of dinner quite the way Polly demanded although Lisa suspected Polly would always tidy up a serving plate no matter how skillful Lannie might be.

Polly's house guests this time were all staying in the 'Annex', a quaint term Bill had invented in 1980 when he built the four-building complex. This

building, close but respectfully removed from the 4,000 square foot 'Main House', had five separate individual and private apartments in it. Lannie lived downstairs in one of these; the other four were upstairs where the building-long front porch provided a spectacular visual setting across miles of sand lined Grace Bay.

Rodney and Maryanne Paul made the short trip to the main house first. Rodney was a specialty vehicle distributor in South Florida. The couple lived in Boca Raton and he had met Polly when she came to Florida to purchase two tour buses for her travel agency. He had found her well prepared and she knew precisely what she wanted and what it should cost. He also had discovered they shared the same birthday and had in fact been born less than 100 miles apart in rural Wisconsin. Ultimately they would share more.

Close on the heels of the Pauls were Bill Thorp and his wife, Julian. Thorp was a professor of economics at the University of Arkansas. He was born in California and a graduate of USC. Bill obtained his doctorate in Arkansas and stayed on to teach where he met Julian as a student in one of his classes. Polly had first encountered Bill on a red-eye airplane flight between Tulsa and Miami. The plane had a scheduled landing in Atlanta and because of plane malfunction Eastern had elected to put all the Miami-bound passengers up in Atlanta overnight. Thorp was fascinated with this lady who seemed to have a written her own textbook to business and he had fallen into her bed in Atlanta to learn more.

Rodney was acting as master of Polly's bar and the last parts of the elaborate dinner were falling into place when the final five ambled across the courtyard. Stanton Wigh the third was never timely for anything. His

father had developed the art of living a leisurely life after Stanton the first had discovered millions of barrels of high grade crude oil beneath his otherwise valueless west Texas ranch. 'The third' was now refining both his grandfather's oil and the lifestyle he learned from his daddy. Trudy Wigh had been an airline stewardess when she met the third and she quickly adopted her husband's attitude that anything worth while would come to them; why bother looking for it? Stanton was but 30 and he had met Polly at a discoteque at Virginia Beach over a labor day weekend in 1985. Polly had fallen all over him in the darkness of the night and they never made it to her room at the Sheraton Beach resort. This was Stanton's first experience making passionate love on a third floor outdoor walkway overlooking the ocean below. It had been further proof to him that good things always found him; he never had to look for them.

The Jacksons were just a little bit nervous about being on Portobello, and staying in Polly's complex. They saw one another at least once each year but always before at some point inside the United States. They ~~had~~ never met Bill Conner and while they had heard a great deal about him, all favorable, they did still ~~saw~~ see Allen routinely because of their business. Both Jim and Wanda knew Allen would pump them for details of Polly's lifestyle when they returned home. Polly knew this too; in fact, her desire to rub her success into her ex-husband's face was precisely why the Jacksons were here this Christmas.

"We can eat now," announced Bob deNuff dejectedly, appearing in the doorway. "The news is depressing," he added, to nobody in particular.

"Alright Lannie, let's get this party moving," announced Polly. "If you all will go to the dining room and take your seats we will begin!"

Polly's dining room was her statement about her own success. When she arrived on the island in 1985, this room was a learning center. Bill's two children had gone to school in this room for a number of years before leaving for California and private schools when Bill divorced his first wife. Polly knew she must have a formal dining room and she wanted no reminders of Bill's prior life or children around. The room had been gutted and reshaped in her image of upper midwestern elegance. There was no room as measure on Portobello; not even at Avery's house.

An interior decorator had been ~~visited~~ IMPORTED from Virginia and a 20 foot sea container followed, filled with objects of art from Greece, Turkey and the eastern mediterrean.

A massive marble-topped table dominated the room, directly under a glass chandeler weighing nearly 1,500 pounds. The roof trusses were rebuilt to support the massive bulk. Gold, gilt-edged breakfronts, each handcrafted in a custom design by the same craftsman, lined one wall. Softly lit to insure each piece inside was properly on display for admiring study, Polly proudly placed more than 20 years of collecting ornate glass and silver pieces on open view.

Each corner of the room was marked with an ultra-modern glass pedestal, just waist height. Atop ~~the~~ TWO pedestals, lightweight pewter castings of the heads of young Greek gods ON THE THIRD, APHRODITE, THE GODESS OF FERTILITY. Inspite of the individual pieces in the room, it was actually almost simplistic. The 15 foot ceiling, the soft mauve wallpaper and the heavy linen accent drapes with matching valences gave the room an instant feel of wealth.

Eleven people were seated. Polly walked to stand behind Bob deNuff and asked for attention. "Everyone here knows one another, except for Bob and

Lisa. This is Bob," she said placing her hand on the older man's shoulder "and here is Lisa," pointing to the woman directly across the table. "They are my dearest friends on the island and Bob can tell you more about Portbello than anyone else here because he has been here since 1972."

And with that the happy meal began with each of the house guest families in turn toasting their hostess. When finally it came time for Bob deNuff to offer his glass in toast, he stood with some difficulty trying to recall a verse he had learned as a schoolboy. Unable, he made up the best approximation he could of the forgotten verse.

"May you all enjoy the spoils of your holiday here and may each of you find in this room the true meaning of life".

And he sat down. By this point so much wine had been consumed by all but Lisa, who no longer drank, that every utterance was either brilliant or outrageously humourous. By ten PM those few still able to speak without slurring their words were urging those who could only speak with slurred words to 'say goodnight'. Lannie immediately moved in to clear the table and begin the several hour exercise to save the leftovers and handwash, dry and put away the special holiday china Miss Polly had set out.

Seventeen-year-old Shawn had never gotten drunk before in his life; his mother was mortified that he had picked this evening to do so and then passed out at the table before sliding down out of his chair and to the floor. When she and Jim had excused themselves to carry their son back upstairs to their Annex apartment, this had set the scene for the balance of the houseguests to also call it a night.

The deNuffs, with Lisa driving and Bob slumped over in the front seat, pulled away as Polly stood alone waving them out of the driveway. All of the

rest were down the sidewalks to their Annex quarters; following the Jacksons' lead. Polly was suddenly chilled and she wrapped her arms around her own waist and rubbed the ~~sharply~~ softly protruding boundary between her small waist and the start of her thighs. Instantly the blood in her body seemed to warm and without hesitation she turned and headed directly to the privacy of her bedroom.

Closing the heavy, solid oak door behind her, Polly went directly to the bed and reached beneath a corner of the heavy cotton bedspread. A small drawer with a lock appeared and from her bedside table she took a key and unlocked the drawer.The exterior size of the drawer was an illusion; pulling on the drawer handle revealed no drawer at all. It was a hinged door and as it folded down more than 6 dozen spiral notebooks were revealed. Each had color coded binder tape. One notebook, laying alone, had no tape at all. Polly lifted this one and placed it on the bedspread before her.

Five years prior to her divorce from Allen, Polly had begun to keep a detailed daily log. At the time she didn't know why she was doing this; and she told no-one that she did.

Many people keep a dairy; Polly told herself in the beginning this was merely her diary. But as the volumes grew and the problems between she and Allen also grew, the diaries took on new meaning. When Allen had taught her how to operate two parts of her brain in parallel at the same time, she had practiced this by dealing with the 'live events' of the present on one side and used the other side to file away the word-for-word utterances of Allen. At night she would click on her 'secondary mind', as Allen called it, and as if taking transcription from a dictating machine, write down exactly everything she had heard Allen say hours before.

Ultimately, when she and Allen would divorce she had confronted him with carefully selected excerpts ~~form~~ FROM the last five years of their life together. Allen's business position, his ability to structure the economics of their divorce as he might have wished, had been considerably diminished by Polly's verbatum recall of his promises and statements of the five prior years. Allen never did know this was all the result of him teaching her the twin-mind technique. He had even accused her of bugging his office and recording their conversations without his knowledge. She never told him the truth.

Polly opened the notebook without a colored tape binding; this was her current book. A paperclip marked her last entry and she opened it to this page. Pen in hand she summarized her day. She started with:

THIS WAS NOT THE MOST MEMORABLE CHRISTMAS OF MY LIFE. I THINK I TRIED TO DO TOO MUCH BY MYSELF AND I LEFT NO TIME FOR THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER. I AM GOING TO BED, ALONE, AND I ACHE. I CANNOT BELIEVE I HAD ALL DAY WITH RODNEY, BILL AND STANTON AND NOTHING HAPPENED ALL DAY OR TONIGHT.

Polly wrote for nearly an hour; her frustrations with her lonliness, her own rating of the dinner party. Of that she wrote:

ELEVEN OF US DRANK WINE. I COUNTED 16 EMPTY BOTTLES. I WILL NEVER MAKE THIS MISTAKE AGAIN.

When finally she finished, noting for the record that Bob deNuff now owed her $13,500 for the sale of property to that duPont fellow, she reread her notes, closed the notebook and secured it behind the locked door.

Folding the bedspread to the bottom of the bed she uncovered deep red sheets that almost shone in the subdued light. Polly went to her bathroom and prepared herself for bed. First she showered and then she sprinkled her firm body with powder. Critically, she stood before hed full wall bathroom

mirror and carefully examined her body. She had smaller than expected breasts for a woman 5 foot 7 inches. But the nipples were oversized for her breast size and three separate tones of brown radiated from the now tense nipple tips.

Polly had been born with a body that would trouble her as it matured. The first time she made love to Allen, he had quickly satisfied his male craving and then rolled out of bed and reached into his pants pocket. Returning to the bed he demanded that she also get out of bed and stand before him. As she did so, trembling, he opened the palm of his right hand to reveal a cloth dressmaker's tape measure. Silently, Allen motioned for her to raise her arms as he carefully measured and then noted aloud her measurements.

'Breasts 33; waist 24; and hips 40'.

Polly had been humililated. Her thick hips had been a constant source of concern since she was a new teenager. Allen was not the first man to make love to her but he had been the first one that 'counted'. Now, standing before him naked and trembling as his wet sperm oozed down the inside of her thighs, he had 'taken her measure'.

"I will marry you," he had said as if ordering a steak dinner, "But you must add at least one inch to the top and take 2 inches from the bottom. The middle is OK."

That was it; that was his proposal to her. He fucked her, forced her to stand before him as wet sperm trickled between her thighs and stated the conditions of the marriage he offered. 'Bigger tits; a smaller ass'.

She had been so frightened and so ashamed of her body that her response had been, "Must I do this before you will marry me?". He didn't smile as he

placed the tape measure around her neck almost as a necklace. Suddenly pulling down on the two ends until the neck loop cut into her skin he had given her the rules of his marriage.

"No, we will be married next month. But, you will work on these points and we'll see how you measure up from time to time." Polly had lived in fear of that tape measure for the next 18 years. Even after she divorced Allen she had nightmares where a tape measure without end grabbed her ankle in her bedroom, yanked her across the sheets and then wrapped her totally like an Egyptian Mummy.

All of these thoughts flooded through her mind as she stood before the mirror squeezing her nipples between thumb and forefinger of two cupped hands. Loosening her hold on the nipples her hands slid slowly down her chest cage and through the concave inset that marked her admirable tiny waist. Now her hands slowed and hesitated. The hips were ahead. Her eyes focused on the mirror; two scultured hands lingered at the base of her waist and just above the two protruding hip bones that were below.

Shortly after Bill died, Polly had worked herself into a terrible period of depression. Time and an operation had brought her out of the depression. A doctor in Sarasota had given her a new mental picture of herself. Just hours before the operations she had once again measured her breasts and hips, alone, in the privacy of her hospital suite. The breasts were still 33; her hips still 40. For years she had tried diets, exercise, and messeurs. Nothing had changed her measurements for more than a few days or weeks at a time. If she added weight, her hips grew at precisely the same rate as her breasts. If she lost weight, the breasts disappeared but the hips never dipped below 40.

Bill had been far less critical than Allen and he even said she should be proud to be 'past 40 and still with the same measurements you had at 18'. But she had long before Bill dispaired at only wearing loose, flowing dresses and skirts, and draping a towel over her swimsuit covered body at the beach if there with anyone but Bill.

After the operations, the days of being confined largely to a hospital bed with bandages covering her breasts and hips had been the longest days of her life. The breasts had been exposed first. She stood for four hours before the mirror clutching the white dressmaker's tape measure and sobbing. Over and over again she had measured and remeasured her bust line. '35; a real 35!' she had moaned through tear stained lips until weak from exhauston she collapsed back into the hospital bed. Two days later the bandages were removed from her hips. She had expected sizeable scars from the liposuction; there was only a redness. The doctor knew his patients always most wanted to be alone after the initial unveiling and he had accomodated her. The hardest thing she had ever done in her life was to wrap the tape measure around her buttox and draw it up tight. Her eyes had closed and her hands had trembled. Twice she lost her grip on the end of the tape and it fell to the floor. When finally she took several deep breaths and gained temporary control of her hands the tape measure had magically slid past the familiar grasp points and drawn to a taunt posture at 38 inches. Polly had fainted dead away and minutes later the nurse found her naked, collapsed on the floor before the mirror with the tape measure still tight about her buttox.

May be too much swelling for accurate measurement just after the operation

Her slender fingers now rolled over her front hip bones and gently traveled around her thighs to her buttox. She squeezed her own bottom impulsively to assure herself it remained firm. A final glance into the

mirror, Polly turned to leave the bathroom switching off the light.

She knew without looking exactly what her watch would say to her. Polly owned more than a dozen watches; some very expensive, some gifts from lovers. The Casio dive watch she wore daily had an elapsed time feature as well as a count down function. Standing before the edge of her bed she selected the count down timer display. In the dim light she could see it showed 1 hour 12 minutes and the odd seconds? Remaining.

She drew a deep breath and ran her fingers across the blood-red satin sheets Lannie had been instructed to place on the bed that morning. What came next was a ritual she resorted to only when all else failed.

In one hour and approximately 12 minutes it would be 72 hours she had her last sexual experience. It, too, had been alone. In 45 years, 32 of these with a consiousness of her own sexual needs, she had learned painfully that unless she experienced an orgasim or a strenuous sexual act every 3 days, her life would turn to unbearable hell. what kind of symptoms: lack of concentratio per am ulat The count down timer on her Casio was a needless reminder that she had barely an hour to slide in under the deadline of her biological clock.

Before exposing herself to the feel of the satin sheets she pushed two buttons on a box by her bedside. One started a series of pre-programmed steps with her in room security system. The deadbolt lock, pushed by an electronic plunger, secured the door. Simultaneously the lights went to a very dim level, and a dedicated VHS tape deck in the back of her walk-in closet loaded a carefully selected pornographic tape into the machine while an audio casette deck switched on Johnny Mathis crooning a 'fuck-me' tune. (too much)

The second button started a timer which appeared as a count-up display on the TV screen which ~~new~~ was already revealing two young Greek men with their heads buried

from front and back into the crotch of a dark, long haired woman laying on red satin sheets.

Christmas day 1990 was almost over.

end/

Chapter 7

Diego de Avila appears on almost no maps. More than 700 miles off the western coast of Mexico, due west of Acapulco, are three islands with virtually no economic, political nor military value. They are so far from the Mexican coast as to escape detection by those who travel north and south between California and the Panama Canal. The islands were not discovered nor were they charted until the same year as the California gold rush; more than 300 years after Mexico proper had been invaded by the Europeans.

A small Mexican military garrison of typically fewer than 30 men normally occupies Diego de Avila. Additionally, there are two government sponsored meteorologists and a civilian staff of five to prepare meals and tend to the laundry of the occupants of this forgotten island. No-one who is there for the military believes he has been appointed to the island as a 'reward'. Nobody ever requests service on Diego de Avila.

Winston Campbell's Canadian passport says he was born in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1938. Winston is the only non-Mexican living in this island group. In the spring of 1988, Winston had arrived from Acapulco in the company of the son of Mexico's then President. A General in the Mexican Airforce flew the duo to the islands' only airstrip in a Mexican Airforce 14 seater executive jet. The balance of the plane's capacity had been taken with crate after crate of wooden boxes, all tightly sealed by black metal bands and each carrying a U.S. and a Mexican customs clearance tag.

Campbell had been moved into the only private residence on the main island; a three bedroom bungalow built in the 1970s by the Mexican government to house then President Escobar during the only occasion anyone in such authority had ever set foot in the islands. Comandante Fiero

had been given verbal and written instructions concerning the Canadian, and loosely translated they were:

1) He can do anything he wants to do, anytime he wants to do it.

2) If he requests something from you, whether it be a need for assistance or a material request, do it. Promptly.

3) Ask him nothing; do not allow anyone to interrupt him or enter his residence unless he approves it.

And the fourth point.

4) We do not expect Senor Campbell to learn Spanish to speak with you, or your replacement. You are to learn English.

The Comandante knew an order when he heard it. He also knew he might spend the balance of his military career in these forgotten islands if he didn't follow his instructions precisely.

The sun was balancing with its lower lip sitting directly on the deep blue ocean to the west as Comandante Fiero saluted briskly to the Canadian greeting him in the doorway. The formal salute over, the two men grasped one another's hands and shook vigorously.

"Welcome to my humble home for Christmas dinner" said the Canadian. "I am pleased for your company."

"I too am glad" beamed Fiero. "I have present for you" he said offering one of the two packages he carried. "And this. It came today on the supply plane" handing Campbell a second box which the Comandante had observed bore a Canadian shipping label.

"I have a present for you, also" smiled Campbell, separating his two parcels by placing one on the dinner table and the second on a counter nearby. "It is here, and we will open our presents before we eat. May I

get you a drink?"

This Canadian had one of the largest liquor supplies he had ever seen in his life but he seldom if ever saw the man drink. That was one of the many, many mysteries about this man.

"Si, yes ... a rum and coke if you please".

"I must congratulate you on your steady improvement in English" complimented the Canadian while dropping ice cubes into the thick stubenware glass. "I will join you but it will be a Canadian drink; Scotch and water".

The Comandante saw the Canadian every few days, but they seldom did more than exchange pleasant greetings. The Comandante had taken seriously his instructions to learn English but he regretted how seldom he had the opportunity to use what he was learning. The casette recordings and the shortwave radio broadcasts he routinely listened to were helpful but no substitute for talking directly to another in English.

"How are you doing with your country chase?" Campbell asked.

The Comandante broke into his most relaxed smile. "Bueno...good", he thought 'now we will have serious talk'.

When Campbell had learned the Comandante was interested in learning to speak English, and he also learned the man had an unexplained interest in electronics, he suggested that perhaps the Comandante would like to combine the two and become a 'Ham' radio operator. "You will learn more about electronics and, you will have the opportunity every day to speak English with people all over North America; even the world", he had explained.

And so he had. From the dozens of wooden crates Senor Campbell brought with him and the still dozens more to follow on the twice annual supply ship from Acapulco had come more electronic equipment than Fiero had ever seen in

his life. Far more equipment than his own headquarters communications center in Acapulco owned. Out of one crate the Canadian had taken several small metal boxes covered with knobs. In still other crates he had found spools of wire and strange white egg shaped pieces he had carefully explained were 'insulators'.

There had followed the most exciting four weeks of the Comandante's life. He and the Canadian had moved the metal boxes covered with knobs to his office and outside they had strung lengths of wire and those insulators to make antennas. Then the Canadian had patiently day after day helped the Comandante understand what each knob on the equipment did, and how a person operated the equipment. Comandante Fiero still shook with excitement when he relived the first time he held the microphone in his own hand and spoke halting English to a man in Houston, Texas.

"I have now worked 210 countries" Fiero said with pride. "Just last week I received my DXCC Award from The League" he continued. Each mail and emergency supply plane to the island brought him dozens, often hundreds of the much coveted ham 'QSL' cards from people he had contacted around the world. When you make contact with 100 different countries and have the required QSL cards to prove this, an international body awards you with a certificate; the 'DXCC Award'.

"I have it here" he smiled reaching into his briefcase. Campbell took the piece of parchment paper and read it over quickly.

"Granted to Pedro Sanchez Fiero, XE4PF, this recognition" and his voice trailed off as his lips silently read to himself the balance of the award. He handed it back to the Comandante and extended his hand. "Congratulations!" and the two lapsed into what hams the world over call an

'eyeball session', one-on-one rather than through the medium of the ether.

Presently a large wall clock announced it was 8PM.

"Oops....time to enjoy our Christmas dinner Pedro" noted Campbell. "I am sorry but I have a radio schedule myself in two hours so even tonight I must watch the clock. Shall we go to the table?"

As the two men arose from the overstuffed chairs of the living room and walked to the dining table at the far end, a Mexican lady in her 30s began to bring the dinner to the table. It included a small turkey with oyster stuffing, sweet potatoes and corn on the cob.

"I thought you might enjoy having a typical Amer...aaah, Canadian Christmas dinner". He poured two glasses of red wine and proposed a toast.

"To your next 100 countries" he offered.

"To the baby Jesus" responded Pedro.

"Before I cut the turkey" suggested Campbell, will you please open your present?" It sat directly in front of the Comandante and when he reached for it he knew he would be forced to stand to lift it. 'What could be so very heavy?' he wondered.

"You may wish to slit the paper across the top to inspect it" Campbell offered "it is quite heavy; actually, 70 pounds."

That was a clue, Pedro thought. But surely it couldn't be! He was anxious and the ribbon holding the paper in place was very tight. As Pedro struggled with the obstinate plastic Campbell handed him a sharp knife.

"Try this" he offered.

The ribbon cut, the paper fell away from the cardboard box. The letters on the outside revealed to Pedro that inside was the very thing he wanted most in the world. The top opened quickly and there was a thick spiral bound

instruction manual. The photo printed on the top of the manual told him everything he needed to know.

"An Alpha! A 2,000 watt amplifier " he said, over and over. Tears welled up in his eyes and then streamed down his cheeks. There was no embarassment however because a Mexican man is not ashamed to cry when he is happy. Regaining his composure he pushed back his chair and rose to stand. Campbell instinctively rose as well and the two friends hugged one another.

Carefully Pedro chose his words.

"This is wonderful" he said, sobbing again. "You have changed my life and I will always be grateful to you". The two hugged again, and then separated to sit down. Campbell said not a word but proceeded to cut the turkey while Pedro thumbed through the instruction manual for the gadget in the box that would give him one of the strongest shortwave ham radio signals in the world.

When the dinner was completed and Pedro had left with his 70 pound amplifier, Winston Campbell set the fine bottle of Mexican wine he had received from Pedro for Christmas to the side of the dinner table. He glanced at his watch and it said 9:50. He had ten minutes. In another room his satellite connected FAX machine was poised and ready for him to sit down at the keyboard for the 10 o'clock long distance meeting.

His eyes glassed over as he stared intently at the brown paper wrapped parcel Pedro had delivered. It had apparently been opened by the Customs people of some country; Canada where it started, the U.S. as it went through, or Mexico. Perhaps all three. The string holding the brown paper wrapper in place had been cut and retied in several places.

He knew what it was. He didn't have to open it now. But in just over two

hours Christmas would be over and it was, afterall, a Christmas present. Campbell rose and walked to the counter to pick up the package, as Maria was stacking the last dishes in the sink. He reached in his pocket for his ever present Swiss Army knife and snapped the string. The brown wrapping paper, a grocery store shopping bag turned inside out he noted, fell loosely from the package.

The box inside had once been wrapped with Christmas paper; pieces of the paper stuck on with Scotch tape revealed parts of a Santa Claus head and pieces of reindeer. The unmarked white box had a sticker on the bottom; 'Product of West Germany'.

He lifted the hinged cardboard top and inspected the handmade German nut cracker laying inside on a bed of white tissue paper. 'Yes, that is the one I selected in the catalog' he told himself. 'And it appears to have arrived intact'. He had just time to carry it into his bedroom and place it on a shelf as his alarm watch struck 10 PM.

Pausing at the doorway to stare at the shelf, he counted to himself. Six German nut crackers all in a row.

-end-

Chapter Eight/

The Monasto family were one day away from their first Portobello anniversary; a week tomorrow. And Paul was growing more anxious by the day to stop being on holiday and get on with his business. He waited at the Portobello airport for a Turks and Caicos National Airlines 11 seat 'islander' to fuel so he could load on board for a flight to Grand Turk.

Like many islands in the Caribbean, virtually all commercial and government activity grinds to a halt between Christmas eve and the day following New Years. It was a revelation to Karen and Paul that during this busiest of all tourist weeks of the entire year many shops and restaurants closed, and even taxi operators simply stop showing up at hotel stands.

Paul had tried to contact Lawrence Harvey to arrange a business meeting from the day they moved into the temporary quarters at Golden Shores. It had taken him four days to run the man down and each day had been increasingly frustrating. More so because he soon suspected the man was home, on Grand Turk, when he called and was avoiding him.

"Going to Grand Turk?" asked the young man standing beside Paul.

"Yes, for the day" Paul responded.

"I almost missed the plane" the young man began, oblivious to the fact that the plane might be another 30 minutes or even an hour before it departed on the 40 minute flight. "I couldn't get a taxi to come for me" he added.

"It is amazing how this island just shuts down and boards up tight at the height of the tourist season" replied Paul. "I guess it has always been that way and nobody wants to change simply because there are tourists here now!"

"How long do you think it will be before we leave?" the man asked, shifting his eyes around the almost empty terminal building. He was eyeing the open door at Gilley's Cafe, in the corner. Paul noticed where he was looking and offered "If you want to pop into Gilley's I'll come and get you when it is time to board". The man agreed, thanked Paul and strode briskly into the bar where he ordered a Polly Girl beer.

Harvey had finally allowed Paul to talk with him, and showed only slight interest in Paul's recitation of how complicated it had been to wrap up all of their Canadian affairs in a few weeks of intense effort. 'Come to Grand Turk and meet me in my office Friday morning' he had directed. Paul had asked 'what time?' and Harvey had simply replied 'take the first morning flight'. Paul was now growing concerned that if the 'first morning flight' turned out to be an hour or more late, his appointment might be off. The longer TCNA took to get their plane ready for takeoff, the more nervous Paul became. By the time the plane finally flew at 10:30, some two hours after its scheduled departure, Paul was talking to himself, out loud.

"If you are going to speak to me, speak louder" the man next to him shouted in his ear. The noise inside the plane was deafening. Paul smiled at the man he had rescued from Gilley's Cafe and closed his eyes in thought. 'I have uprooted my family from Toronto. We are here with everything we have; barely $4,000 in cash and that will disappear in less than a month at the present rate. The kids need to go to school, Karen needs a home she can call her own, and I need to earn enough money to keep us here. If we don't make it here, now, we are doomed as a family.'

The plane lurched sideways and Paul glanced at the turquoise water below. Small sand bars protruded here and there above the light water chop. He

could see no real islands as he stared to the south.

'I met this Harvey fellow at the Erebus. Everyone there had been paying the man homage, as if he was all powerful and all knowing. We talked because he said he was in the house building business and I said I was a cabinet maker. It took less than 30 minutes for me, talking to this stranger, to agree to bring my family back and go into business with this Harvey guy. We shook hands and that was it. He sent me FAX instructions telling me what to do, how to complete my work permit and residency applications. I did exactly as he said and that attorney Charles Scott had done the rest. How stupid can I be? How desparate can I be?'

Paul could feel the Islander aircraft excuting a manuever. He looked out again and saw the edge of a small island below him. That would be South Caicos. The locals called it 'the drug island', apparently because it was a known trans shipment point between Colombia and the states.

Craning his neck, Paul could see out the same front windscreen as the pilot. A long, thin island lay directly ahead and the plane was on a visual course aligned with a runway that crossed the short way across the island. That would be Grand Turk, Paul decided.

Grand Turk had once dominated these islands. It remained the capital but in the last decade as Portbello had rapidly developed Grand Turk had lost: population, investment, and now even influence. The British Governor and his Queen-appointed staff were still here. So too were all of the government leaders. But since 1989 there had been a steady movement of government personnel to Portbello; each department was racing to establish their own sub-offices there. Each month there was less and less reason to travel to Grand Turk from Portobello for government business. The present

administration led by the Honourable Orville Burnside Smythe was doing what they could to stem the tide of abandonment of Grand Turk. But inside Smythe's administration he had 'loyal ministers' including Harvey who were up to their collective necks in business activities on Portbello. Only Smythe himself had not figured out the grass was truly greener on Portbello.

Harvey had been swept into office in the 1988 election that saw 8 of the nations' 11 elected legislature seats filled with members of the Grand Democratic Party: GDP for short. The Islander touched down on the west end of the runway and braked to a halt less than half way along the 6,000 foot paved strip. Ahead Paul could see the east end of the runway ran almost to the edge of the island itself.

'Boy' he thought to himself 'this island is really narrow!'. The plane began moving again as the pilot applied power and brakes to opposite sides of the aircraft, spinning it to the left and towards the terminal building just north of the runway.

"Not much of a facility" suggested the man to his left. "And I thought Portobello was small!".

Paul nodded and smiled. The building looked forty or fifty years old; a new section, mostly rough finished plywood and cement blocks, had been tacked on to the west end. A sign over the doorway into the newer section proclaimed 'International Arrivals'. The pilot veered right and stopped less than 50 feet from the building. A handcart for baggage was being pushed towards the plane by an indifferent native. Nobody seemed like they were in much of a hurry here.

Paul carried a thin plastic letter sized pouch; inside were his plans and cash flow projections for the cabinet making business. He followed the

pidgeon English signs through the small building to a taxi stand in front. The airport seemed to have more people than Portobello, but it was only a fraction of the size so perhaps it was just the confined quarters. Two men lounged against a 15 year old Buick Electra arguing as he exited to the street area. Both looked up and one said 'Taxi, sir?'.

"Yes, the Ministry of Natural Resources please" he answered. The taller, thinner of the two broke away and directed him to a fairly new 12 passenger van parked away from the sidewalk.

"Anymore with you" the driver asked. "Not with me, but there were others on the plane" Paul responded. "Right back" said the man and he disappeared into the building. Presently he returned with the man who had started the trip in Portobello.

"We drop him first" announced the driver; "he going to see Shawn" suggesting everyone must know who Shawn is. They circled the small parking lot and drove past the entrance gates. Paul read the sign to himself. 'Welcome to Grand Turk...for the Rest of Your Life'.

"My name Jack" interrupted the taxi driver. "Anything you need here, anything, you ask me. I get it for you or take you there". The other man said nothing, Paul answered "I have an appointment with Lawrence Harvey and guess after the appointment I will need to come back to the airport". Paul was uncertain how difficult it might be to get a cab during this holiday period, and felt he should arrange for one now.

"No problem; I take you back. How long you be?".

"I really don't know." He glanced at his watch and it said 11:15. "I suppose 1 o'clock or so."

"OK, I meet you. If you need me sooner, you call 2277 and they reach me

on this", holding up a handheld radio. "2277; OK?"

"OK, thank you."

The taxi driver didn't look or actually sound native. He was very black, but his facial features looked more, well, Haitian. Paul was beginning to be able to tell Haitians apart from Turks and Caicos Islanders. They were driving down a pothole filled street passing stray donkies and horses that Paul had been warned roamed Grand Turk at will. 'The kids would like to see this' he thought to himself; 'it is just like living in a giant farmyard'.

Presently the taxi pulled off the road and stopped. "Shawn here" and he pointed to a small white building with a modern facade. The original building had to be at least 200 years old. A small sign bolted just to the right of the door said "Shawn Kenny, Barrister/Solicitor".

His companion climbed out of the taxi's front seat as Jack came around to collect the fare. They exchanged a few words Paul could not understand and the man turned to wave goodbye to Paul through the front windshield.

"Next stop, Harvey office" announced Jack climbing back into the van. "He know you here?".

"Yes...well, I hope so" admitted Paul. The late arrival of the airplane did concern him. In less than two minutes the taxi pulled off the road again and into a small parking lot. A two story building with well worn wooden siding and broken roll-out window panes surrounded them. "Harvey up there" Jack pointed, almost directly above them but through a dingy stairwell. "You go down there, up and come back here" indicating an office straight overhead. Paul asked how much the fare was.

"You pay me later, when I take you airport. OK?"

"That's fine" and he waved to Jack before setting off up the unimpressive stairway. 'This is like sections of Toronto I would never go into' he thought to himself. 'These people really don't have much money for government!'

One door read MINISTRY OF NAT. RESOURCES and he entered. The office was empty; the three desks barren of all but the most simplistic office items. One had a decrepid manual typewriter and two to three year old copies of second rate U.S. magazines were piled on the tiny wooden stand next to the only waiting chair in the room. An oversized color photograph of a black man Paul judged to be in his 30s hung on the wall; on the opposite wall a much better quality photo and frame of Queen Elizabeth the II.

Paul stood there for a moment wondering what to do next when the muffled sound of a voice, apparently talking on a telephone, crawled under the transom of a closed door towards him. He recognized the voice of Harvey but only caught the occasional word. Paul stood waiting for the voice to stop, and looked around to see if the in-use light was shining on any of the telephones. The British phones gave no such indication. Presently the voice grew silent and Paul walked to the door where he had heard the sound, and knocked.

"Who there?" came the response.

"Paul Monasto" he replied. There was a long silence, some noise inside of the room, and then a terse command.

"Come in."

Paul opened the door to find Harvey sitting behind a desk filled with seemingly hundreds of manila file folders; each stuffed with sheets of paper. The floor around the battered wooden chair Harvey sat in was also

covered with file folders. Harvey was 40ish, and overweight; as Paul remembered.

"I am Paul Monasto and I am sorry-"

Harvey cut him off. "No matter, sit down."

"I am grateful you can see me today; I didn't realize this week was a holiday-".

"No matter; now, to business."

Paul reached into his plastic case and brought out the ten sheets of paper he had prepared with Karen's help. There were lists of equipment he would require and lists of basic materials. He had previously sent all of this on ahead from Toronto using a FAX service. He handed these sheets to the Minister.

"I believe you have these-."

"They are here" Harvey interrupted, sweeping his eyes across his desk as if looking for the FAX copies he had received.

Paul took a deep breath. This was not the same man he had met in the Erebus bar. That man had listened patiently to his story and proposal, and had been much more accomodating.

"Mr. Harvey, I am here to go to work. I want to go to work, now. I have my family and we need to get settled. But first I have to work." Harvey looked at Paul and turned to stare through the broken glass windows at the street below. Then he turned back to Paul.

"Your personal affairs are yours to resolve. The equipment you have requested is already in my Portobello shop. I have a list of people who have cabinet and kitchen work to be done. There is a directory of the Florida suppliers I use as well. All you have to do is go to the people on the list

and work out the details of the work they need done. Then order the materials you will need from the suppliers, and build what they need. There is nothing else to discuss."

"These lists-?"

"Here" Harvey responded reaching almost magically half way down one of the many piles of manila folders and sliding a single folder from the stack. Paul took the folder and began reading the contents. Harvey interrupted his concentration.

"There are two things I require. First, you must always obtain no less than 50% of the total job as a downpayment. You will give this money to my office manager on Portobello and he will handle our finances. You will be paid 20% of each job for your own and you will receive half of that when you hand over the 50% deposit. You will receive the balance when the job is completed and the work has been paid for. If people do not accept your work or refuse to pay the balance in full, you will have nothing more coming for that job. Is that clear?"

"I think so, but-"

"Second, you do not work for me. You work for my office manager. You are to tell no-one, not even your wife that you work for me or that I own the business. Is that clear?"

"Clear, but I am afraid Karen-".

"Karen is your wife?"

"Yes, I am afraid-".

"Then you will correct her when you arrive on Portobello. If I ever learn you have told somebody you work for me or I own this business, we are finished. Is that clear?"

"Yes, clear." Paul was quickly learning Harvey didn't want him to add very much to their conversation. He did want him to agree to everything he said. At the moment there was little else he could do.

"You must never call me at this office; never. You must never come to see me at this office, again. Is that clear?"

"Clear."

"Good, now that we understand let me say I am pleased you are in my country and have brought with you so many skills my country needs. There is one more thing."

"Yes?"

"You will be sent one or two men next week after the holiday period is over. These are men I have selected to become your apprentices. See that they both learn your trade; promptly."

"But if they-."

"They are my cousins."

The tone of 'my cousins' was so emphatic Paul knew instantly that these men were his cousins first, apprentices second. He was about to get two helpers he didn't want, probably couldn't train, and who would report everything that went on to Harvey. Worst of all, he couldn't fire them because they were Harvey's 'cousins'.

Paul rose to leave, sliding the new manila folder into his plastic case.

"You can leave that" Harvey said.

"The lists?" questioned Paul.

"No, the folder. The lists you will need."

Paul laughed out loud; of course manila folders were a priceless commodity in this office and Harvey was obviously a very careful man who

guarded everything that came into his possession.

"Thank you for your time; when will I see you-?"

"I am on Portobello each week. I will see you there. But remember--."

"Yes, I don't work for you and you do not own the woodworking shop" completed Paul.

Harvey smiled and extended his hand. "Charge big dollars for your work; most of your customers will be rich whites" he said without regard to Paul's skin color. It was obvious he did not consider Paul white and rich. To Minister Harvey being rich was more important than being white.

"I always charge top dollar" and he turned to leave the cramped office. Harvey was already dialing the telephone behind him as the door closed with a loud clunk.

Paul stared at his watch; not yet 12 noon. What he needed most was a stiff drink.

For the past five days Karen Monasto had all but ignored the clock. The children had risen when they wished and on their own dashed from the building to the waiting sandy beach in front. She and Paul had slept, late; often to 10 or even 11. She had fed the family when it said it was hungry, put it to bed when it was tired. There was no routine at all, and it had been a wonderful feeling of freedom to do as they wished when they wished.

This morning had been different. She had set the alarm for 7 to be certain Paul got to the airport in time for the 8:30 flight. She had forced the children up and made each clean up their sleeping areas. Then she spent the morning organizing their bags and boxes after insuring that everyone got a proper breakfast. Karen expected Paul to return with much enthusiasm. She actually expected he would begin work the very next day. It was time to get

the family off the holiday routine and closer to a normal schedule.

Her watch said it was now 12 noon. She had sandwiches prepared in the refrigerator and was walking to the front sliding doors to call out to her children as there was a knock at the back door.

"Well, good morning Mr. Burgess" she said, opening the door. "Please come in."

"Thank you Karen. I wanted to check on how you were getting along and to ask if there is anything I can help you with."

Karen had developed an instant liking for this man. He was so helpful and friendly and nothing seemed impossible to him. They were still using a car he had insisted they borrow the day they moved in and he had sent over plates of cookies and even ice cream on two occasions.

"You have done so much for us, already" she began. Avery waived her aside.

"It gives me great pleasure to do things for others. I still remember how difficult it was for Velma and I when we returned home nearly 20 years ago. I like to help because in this life one hand washes the other" and he emphasized the point by taking Karen's hand and rubbing it with his own. Karen glowed warmly inside.

"Paul is in Grand Turk" she began, and then remembered Paul's instructions not to say where he was. 'Surely there was no harm in telling Mr. Burgess', she told herself.

"I expect him back before dinner; something to do with his business."

"May we sit down?" asked Avery. "Tell me about his business."

Karen quizzed herself. 'What could she say? He already knew Paul was a cabinet maker. And they were starting a new business here.' She decided the

best approach was partial truth.

"Paul has some arrangement to use a shop facility which is about to run out of work" she began. "I think it has been used by the people building the lower cost government housing."

"I see" said Avery. "But is this Paul's business, alone?"

"Not exactly" began Karen, nervously twisting a towel she still carried between the fingers of her hands. Avery noticed her hands.

"I don't mean to pry" began Avery "but I need cabinets made myself and I would like to discuss this, with Paul. Does he have work already lined up?"

"I really don't know; he will know more when he gets back from Grand Turk. He is meeting with-" and she stopped herself. She had almost said 'his business partner'.

"Yes?"

"He is meeting with people who need work done" she continued. Flustered, afraid she had already said too much she rose from the couch. "May I ofer you some iced tea, or anything?"

"Thank you, no. This is not a formal social visit and I have promised my grand daughter I would watch her dive in the pool so I must be going." With that he rose from the couch and took Karen's hand. "Ask Paul to come see me when he returns; and if you need anything-".

"I enjoy our visits; please come again" and Karen watched the large man walk out the door and disappear towards his own villa several hundred yards away.

Paul had been in luck. When he left the stairway to the courtyard below the Minister's office he spied Jack's van parked almost where it had let him off. Jack waived at Paul beckoning him to come over. Jack was talking

with two smartly dressed policemen. Paul stopped a few feet short and listened to the conversation.

"Police take it" Jack was saying. "Everyone know that."

"No mon, no policemon take."

Jack threw his arm in the air to show he didn't believe what the man was saying, and headed for Paul. "You ready now" he asked?

"Yes, I guess so. But the plane doesn't leave for nearly two hours."

"You want see Grand Turk" Jack suggested, always ready for an extended tour fare.

"How about some lunch; can I buy you lunch" he asked?

"OK, what kind food you want?" Jack had a feeling this man had not been to Grand Turk before.

"Something native; fish" Paul suggested.

"Kitina" said Jack and the two climbed into his van. The Kitina hotel, operated by an American ex-pat who was married to a local woman, was not particularily known for its fish nor native food. But it was the most expensive place on the island and if this man was buying; Jack started the conversation again.

"You see Harvey?" he asked.

"Yes, he was there; alone."

"This holiday week; I afraid you come all way and not see him."

"Me too" Paul confided. "Say, what were you discussing with those two policemen?"

Jack laughed loudly. "They tell me no policeman steal smoke; I tell them everyone know they steal."

"Steal smoke? You mean grass, marijuana?"

"Yeh, grass. Last week police find two bails grass on fishing boat from DR. They take and lock up. Last night both bails gone. Police say somebody break into police station and steal. I say police steal themselves."

"But you were telling those policemen that; you were accusing them of stealing the grass?"

"Not them; they only patrol, not bosses. Some detective or inspector; that who steal."

The van pulled off the road and stopped. "We here; Kitina."

The Kitina is on the west side of Grand Turk, less than 200 feet from the ragged beach. Unlike the Portobello white sandy beaches, Grand Turk's are not protected by reefs, and constant erosion chews away at the sand. However, the relatively shallow water ends abruptly near the beach and divers find Grand Turk's diving wall one of the most spectacular in the western hemisphere. The Kitina survives because of this wall diving and because it is the only reasonably comfortable hotel on the island. But the tourism business of Grand Turk is hardly a fraction of that on Portobello and although this was the busiest week of the season, Paul and Jack found the hotel's dining room virtually empty.

Jack followed Paul's lead and ordered a draft beer. He had been planning how to resume their talk.

"You know Harvey?"

"No, not really. He is just somebody I met on Portobello, once."

"The politicians here very dangerous" Jack went on. "They all want one thing; money." His next question caught Paul completely by surprise. "You give him money?"

Paul stared at the man for a few seconds and then turned away from Jack's

piercing eyes. When Paul did that, Jack instinctively knew he was not going to get a truthful answer.

"No, no money. I have no business with him."

Jack smiled and took a long double mouthful of the draft.

"Then I warn you. Politicians only see white man because they want your money. If you not pay him yet, you pay next time. Only one group worst than politicians; that our police."

Paul was very upset by what he heard. He admitted to himself he, like most whites coming to these islands, pictured the natives in his mind as simplistic, almost childlike. Now this nearly complete stranger was telling him to be careful and it shocked Paul to hear Jack saying very incriminating things about the country's leaders.

"Jack, you barely know me. We haven't said but a few hundred words to one another. Aren't you afraid I will run back to Harvey and tell him what you are saying; shouldn't you be more careful what you say and whom you say it to?"

Jack set his beer down and stared intently into Paul's eyes. This time Paul did not look away. "You worry about me?"

"Yes."

Jack laughed and it broke the tension. "Then I tell you not worry. I am not Turks Islander. I come here from Haiti, long ago. Nobody mess with Jack; he know too much!"

"Is that what works here; knowing so much you are feared, and left alone? I really need to know because I have moved my family here and I want to survive."

Jack became very serious again. "You move here; you mean here, Grand

Turk, or Portobello?"

"Portobello."

"That where you meet Harvey?"

"Yes" and Paul knew he was letting his own guard down.

"Harvey has much business Porto; he making people here mad. Those who go into business with him could be in big trouble. You understand?"

"I understand; and I thank you for the warning. I guess I have to tell you what type of business I am in because you will find out anyhow."

Jack smiled and sat back in his chair raising the draft again to his lips.

"OK. I am a cabinet maker and I will build kitchens and cabinets on Portobello."

"Harvey build houses there. Now I understand." And he surprised Paul again.

"Harvey get you work permit, yes?"

"Well, he did help but I filled out the forms and filed them myself."

"Let me tell you attorney you use; Charles Scott."

"How did you know that?"

"Scott only attorney in islands now who get white man work permit. Government give no more unless politicians approve. Only Scott handle those to get through. I understand this."

Paul's head was swimming. If this cab driver he barely knew on Grand Turk had it all figured out, how long could he keep his word to Lawrence Harvey that no-one ever know about their relationship? He drained his beer and motioned for the waitress. "Scotch on the rocks" he ordered.

Avery Burgess was sipping a diet cola and munching on a fresh lobster

salad under an awning adjacent to his 60 foot backyard pool. His grand daughter Rose and Susie McClaskey were doing muscle building exercises at the far end of the pool. Avery had requested a demonstration of the practices Susie would be doing with Rose since they would be leaving for Michigan in two days. Susie considered this a command performance and she glanced frequently at Avery to be sure he was watching. She heard the telephone chime sound off and saw Avery fumbling on a small shelf under the lounge table for a telephone. It was the 'yellow phone' and she knew this meant Avery's private line. Susie was not surprised to see Avery turn his back to them and hunch over with both elbows resting on his knees. Avery held some of the most intense telephone conversations she had ever witnessed; especially on the yellow telephone. She slowed down the exercise pace to save herself and Rose for the return of Avery's attention.

"He is in Grand Turk, now" Avery was saying. "I suspect he is meeting with Larry Harvey. I have double confirmation he is somehow in business with Harvey."

Two days prior Avery had received a copy of the letter Harvey wrote to immigration urging they approve Paul Monasto's application for a work permit and for work related residency. He had also found 'charge filings' for nearly $70,000 in shop wood working equipment, recorded by a Miami firm against Lawrence Harvey to insure Harvey couldn't sell off equipment he hadn't yet paid for fully.

The voice on the phone answered Avery.

"I have some interesting information as well" said Polly. "It seems Timothy Klungess is rebuilding his kitchen and he is expecting to start next week using a brand new cabinet maker here. We can both guess who that is!"

"Has Tim met this cabinet maker, yet?"

"No, that's the really interesting part. It seems Timothy has arranged for this work through someone he describes as being 'politically connected'. I asked him how politics would get him quality cabinets and he just laughed."

"Hummm. I stopped and spoke with Karen Monasto just a while ago. She promised Paul would come to see me when he returns from Grand Turk."

"Do you have a plan?"

"Not yet, but I will tonight. Do you have one?"

Polly took a deep breath and pushed a cat off her lap onto the floor. "Perhaps. But when you talk with Paul, please remember Karen is reluctant to go to work as long as Paul is the breadwinner. And I want a shot at Karen. If either of us has a plan, it has to include making Karen fend for herself so she comes to me for work."

"I understand fully. But this is going to be difficult. You need Karen but Paul has to fail first. I need Paul because he is good at what he does; or at least I assume he is good. This could be some challenge, my dear."

"Will you call me after you talk with him?" Polly asked.

"Of course."

"God bless" and the phone went dead.

end/

Chapter Nine

"Polly, are you in there?" called out Rodney Paul entering the rear door on the Conner main house. Rodney thought he could hear her voice coming from the office. He started in that direction. The vacation had been almost everything he had expected. He knew Polly Conner was an unusual woman with resources but until he and Maryanne arrived on Portobello he could not imagine how extensive her businesses. He didn't know about the radio and television, for example. Nor her apparently multi-million dollar real estate ventures. He still didn't know much; just the little bits and pieces he had picked up while nosing around her buildings and overhearing her on the telephone from time to time. Only one thing had been missing, so far.

"Polly, are you in there? May I come in?" he announced approaching her partially shut office door. He heard her say 'God Bless' and then in an instant she replied to him.

"Is that you Rodney; by all means do come in."

He pushed open the door and she whistled softly. He smiled. Rodney had packed a very brief swimsuit which he had not worn up to now. It revealed everything he had to reveal and he felt something growing and pressing against the spandex material. Polly noticed it all.

"Something on your mind?" she teased, pushing the white cat on her lap to the floor. She did not get up but she did swivel the chair to face him.

"Well, actually, yes. There is. The girls have walked down the beach with Bill and Stanton to inspect Club Med. I told them we might have some vehicle business to discuss. Do you have the time?"

Polly grasped her wrist with her right hand and rubbed her wrist. Her palm was already sweating profusely.

"Did they just leave?".

Rodney took a half step towards her and stopped. He felt his blood pressure building and he too rubbed his palms, on the spandex. Both hands were very wet.

"About ten minutes ago; I stood on the balcony of the Annex to make sure they wouldn't turn around and start back."

"I don't think we should have our 'vehicle discussion' here; there can be too many interruptions. Let me change my clothes and we'll check out that van I bought from you; OK?"

"Do you want me to get it out of the garage?" he offered.

"I want you...I want you to get out of the doorway so I don't have to walk past you to go to my bedroom. Why don't you get the van, then? Stay in it and I will join you there. I'll drive."

Rodney was pleased she shared his craving. He had been almost afraid Polly had invited him here only for business. He smiled and turned to leave. "Don't be long!".

"Rodney?"

"Yes, what?"

"Has anyone ever told you not to wear that brief a bathing suit when you expect to have a hard-on?"

He laughed and looked down at himself. There, protruding above the draw string was the circumsized head of his penis.

"Don't lose it; I will be just a few minutes."

He retraced his steps to the back door and could hear, and feel, her walking behind him towards her bedroom. The Ford van he had sold to her some two years ago had a special meaning for both of them. When Polly had come

into his business to order the twin tourist coaches they had spent most of one day designing the near-custom vehicles. At the end of that day there would be a dinner party which he and Maryanne planned to attend. It had been a good business day; this lady was spending more than $100,000 with him and he had been fascinated with her business savvy.

As they had walked from his office towards her rented car she spied a new Ford van parked in his lot. 'May I look at that?' she had asked. He had started to tell her the sad plight of the vehicle as they approached it from the rear. It was a custom ordered by a man who was arrested for drug dealing the day he was to take delivery. Rodney had a deposit that covered the customization but the vehicle was far too elaborate for the typical weekend traveler. He could still remember her words when he opened the rear door to reveal the unexpected interior.

'Oh my God, it is perfect!' she had said with great excitement. Then she had thrown her arms around him and hugged tightly. This had surprised him because up to this point Polly had been very businesslike.

'Can we take it for a ride?' she had next asked, climbing through the rear door and dropping herself into the oversized velvet covered swivel chair just inside. He could still picture how she squirmed in the chair and drew her long legs up to her chest revealing muscular, well proportioned thighs.

Their test drive had lasted three hours although the speedometer indicated they had gone less than 15 miles. Rodney had driven towards the beach and parked far from any tourists because Polly had asked him how it might drive in sand. When he finally arrived home two hours late for the dinner party he had an entirely new perspective on sex.

The van looked almost as good as the day he sold it to her. He smiled to himself because of the price she had paid for it. He lost no money, but she essentially got the customization free. Opening the van door he realized his penis was still protruding out of the top of his swimsuit. 'It gets no longer than this' he thought to himself, pushing and tugging until it somehow was totally covered.

He started the motor and glanced at the speedometer. Less than 10,000 miles and now two years old. 'This may be a small island, but she doesn't drive it alot' he decided. He backed it from the garage and pulled up in front of the rear door. Placing it in park, he moved to the passenger bucket seat just as the house door opened. He expected Polly and was surprised to see Lannie.

"Miss Polly go?" she asked.

"Yes, with me. We have, uh, some business to do" he added.

Lannie smiled and said softly to her self "business" as Polly slide past her and down the two steps to the concrete driveway.

"Is this suitable for a business meeting?" smiled Polly opening the driver's side door and pausing for effect.

He didn't know how she had done it. In just a few minutes Polly had changed from a cotton top and loose fitting shorts to a below knee length black-black cocktail dress. She even had 3 inch spike black heels on, and stockings!

"Won't we look strange, I mean me dressed in this?" and he looked down at his brief swimsuit just in time to witness the reappearence of the circumsized head.

"Nobody will see us; nobody!" and she slid into her bucket seat. Rodney

stared at the long slit in the dress that revealed every inch of her right leg and thigh.

"My God! Matching garter belt." Both of his hands came together across his groin. "But no matching panties!".

Polly kicked off her 3 inch heels and drove barefoot. "I never could drive with those damned heels" and they headed out of the complex and towards the south.

"Anyplace special?" he asked, still with his eyes locked on her bare leg and thigh. "This looks like a good place; why not stop here?"

They were barely 200 feet through the massive gate of Polly's property. She laughed and smiled. "Over there" she pointed "on the south side, I own 9 acres at the very top of the tallest hill on that part of Portbello. It is a very special place to me because it is at the end of a deadend road, and from the driveway I have cut you feel as if you are on top of the entire world."

They drove in silence, each thinking their own private thoughts. Rodney waited until Polly had turned off the main highway and was obviously heading for her hill before he reached across the space between the bucket seats to take her hand.

She didn't resist and for several minutes they held each other's hand so hard that both hands were drenched in perspiration. Shortly, there bodies would join their hands.

"Polly, I think about you often" Rodney began.

"That's sweet of you" Polly responded. She didn't really want to talk; between her thighs a pool of her own fluid was already drenching the bottom of her dress.

"You are the most unusual woman I have ever met and -".

"Rodney, don't say anymore. In sixty seconds we will be there. I want you to clear your mind of everything except what we are about to do."

The van turned to the right and began a steep climb along a coral covered sand based road. There were no power lines, no houses. The area was not impressive; until the van climbed the last 50 feet and swung abruptly up a newly created driveway. Rodney could not control his reaction.

"Oh my...look at this! And you own this?" The view was 360 degrees; shallow turquoise water to the south, rolling hills all lower than this one to the west and north with the ocean beyond. To the east, a small marina across flat lands and then the ocean again.

Rodney's eyes were glued to the majesty of the scene. "I own all of this" she said in a matter of fact tone. "Now, for the next little while, you own all of this" and she flipped her dress away from her left leg and gently stroked her own thighs with the tips of her long fingers.

Rodney snapped abruptly to the reality of Polly. With her left hand she was pulling on her spike heels. The tips of her fingers on her right hand moved slowly away from her thighs to her lips. She moistened each finger individually and thrust her hand past the top opening in her dress finding her left breast. Tenderly she rubbed the full breast and then the nipple. Her shoes now on she leaned towards Rodney and reached out for him with her free hand.

As he slid out of his bucket seat towards her he was vaguely aware that his swimsuit had caught over the top of the seatbelt latching mechanism. The last sound he would remember for the next hour was the spandex material ripping as he fell into the narrow area between the two seats.

The rear of Polly's van was littered with pieces of her clothing. The heels had caught just on top of her bucket seat as she had fallen on top and then crawled beyond him to the overstuffed chair at the rear. Now she wore only her black, lacy garterbelt and tattered remains of her light black stockings. The dress was wrapped around a second chair and there on the floor halfway to the rear the torn remains of Rodney's bathing suit. It had yet to occur to him he had nothing to wear back to the Complex.

Inspite of the open front windows, the van reeked of strong body odors. Rodney was beneath her in the chair with their limbs so interwoven an observer would have been hard pressed to identify what belonged to whom.

Polly began to unravel and Rodney suddenly wondered what time it might be. His head turned and eyes squinted to focus on the digital clock the drug dealer had ordered, against the wall. He started to move, himself, as Polly effortlessly dropped to the carpeted floor beside the chair.

"No, not yet" and she softly pushed on his stomach. With both hands she massaged the lower abdomen and skillfully wrapped her fingers around his penis. Then she pushed his legs slowly apart and lowered her lips to the tip. Her lips sank the full length and stopped against his groin only when they ran out of penis to envelope. Her hands gingerly massaged his balls.

Rodney threw his head back involuntarily and his body grew rigid. The sounds from his lips were not words. He struggled to form words but the lips would not cooperate. To himself, as blood rushed through his body he thought in self defense. 'I am empty; there is nothing left. She will be disappointed.' Polly seemed to sense his thoughts. Her lips stroked the full length and she pulled away from the tip, kissing it gently.

"Just one more time Rodney; I won't be disappointed. I promise!" and she kissed the head again and pushed her lips all the way to his heavily haired groin.

Polly's hands moved with such skill and composure Rodney barely realized her tongue was rotating around and around his entire penis with a rhythem. His mind was aglow with blurred bright lights as the blood from his pounding heart pulsed beat after beat through his head. Then he felt a rush in his intestines as his penis snapped to a rigid position. He was totally unprepared for the rush of sperm that shot rapidly through the full length of his upright tube and exploded out of its' head into Polly's waiting mouth.

Polly too felt the penis grow rigid and she knew what might follow. But Rodney had already cum twice and she never expected the sizeable mouthful of sperm that now wrapped around her tongue. A full body shiver shot through her as she slowly withdrew her lips being careful to not leave sperm behind. Free of the tip she rolled her tongue inside of her mouth collecting as much sperm as possible on the tip of her tongue. Rodney was still shaking; his entire body quivered. She held his penis lovingly in her hands and drew her body up on knees to lean forward. Her lips came to a rest against Rodney's moist mouth and with the tip of her tongue she painted his sperm first across his lips and then surrounded his mouth with a coating.

Rodney's eyes remained closed as Polly drew her body on top of his and nestled in atop him in the large chair. For ten minutes neither spoke.

"Polly, we have been gone two hours."

She opened her eyes and looked at his face. He was staring at the digital clock. She smiled to herself; many a time she had stared at that same clock

and harbored the same thoughts.

"I don't want to go" she began.

"I never want to go" he added. "Can we stay here forever?"

Again she smiled to herself. She, too, had thought those very words in this very chair dozens of times. Polly pressed her fingers to his lips and closed her eyes. For another ten minutes neither one said a word.

Rodney opened his eyes abruptly and searched the van for his bathing suit. Laying on the floor it didn't look damaged but he was now remembering how it snagged on the seatbelt latch and ripped as he fell to the floor. He seemed to remember that he had not taken it off; it had simply fallen off. Panic gripped him.

"Polly, my suit...I think it is torn badly!"

"Your suit?" she asked puzzled. He hadn't worn a suit; "Oh, the swimsuit?"

"Yes, when I fell out of the bucket seat it caught on the seat belt gadget. I think I ripped it really badly. What will I wear-".

Polly was laughing. The more she thought about Rodney getting out of the van at the Complex holding his swimsuit together the more she laughed.

"I don't think it is funny" he began. "Suppose somebody, suppose Maryanne-".

Polly's laughter was now virtually out of control. The image she had of Rodney, his back and sides scraped by her fingernails, his body wrung of all emotion, limping down the sidewalk, was exhilirating. She seldom admitted this to herself but she really did enjoy reducing a man to a whimpering state. It gave her a feeling of supreme power; she could do anything she wanted to this man after she squeezed the last drop of sperm from his

quivering body.

"Polly, please..."

"I can't help it" she sobbed through tear filled eyes. Her delight had been so intense as she watched Rodney panicing her eyes had moistened.

"But what if - here, let me get it!" and Rodney tried to move her from his lap. Playfully, Polly pushed him back into the seat and repositioned herself squarely on top of his genitals.

"I will get it. You stay put" and she slowly moved from his lap and bent over to kiss the tip of his now shriveled penis. "Good boy" she said into the tip staring squarely at the end. "You were good to Miss Polly".
She glanced back at Rodney's face and he was panic striken. She turned away and moved her hips slowly, in a grinding motion to walk half stooped over in the low van to his discarded swimsuit.

Holding it in her hands she smiled again and then turned to face Rodney. "Looky here" she said running her fingers around the intact leg hole. "Nothing to fear". Rodney's face relaxed.

"Oh-oh, look at this!". Her hand grasped the torn suit and she held it draped across her chest so Rodney could clearly see the other leg hole was totally torn out. Rodney's face was flushed and ashen white at the same time. His right hand went to his mouth in total fear.

"Oh my, oh my what will we do?" she teased. "Maybe we can find some tape in here someplace and tape it back up!".

Rodney was shaking all over and for the first time Polly felt just a twinge of remorse for him. 'This big brave man had dived without hesitation between her legs. He had emptied his sperm sack into her over and over again and now he was feeling guilt. Or was he merely afraid of getting caught?'

She was not prepared when Rodney began to sob. She couldn't remember the last time a man had made love to her and then sobbed. She also couldn't remember the last time she brought a house guest back to the complex; naked.

"Rodney, I have an answer. It is alright. Look, I apologize for this. I do have an answer!"

He cleared his eyes to see Polly scampering about the van clad only in her torn stockings and garter belt. She was stooping to pick up their clothing. With it piled in front of her, she sat down in the other chair and peeled off the remains of her stockings. Then she stood and bumped her hips in his direction, sliding the expensive black garter belt to her toes. Now she was as naked as he.

She tossed the garter belt in the pile with the other clothing and walked to the big chair. "This is no time to start again" he protested.

"Perhaps. Let me show you the solution to our problem."

Polly reached beneath his chair after pushing his legs apart. A drawer was there and she pulled it open. Looking down at her, bent over in front of him, with breasts tickling his knees, he saw her taking articles of clothing from the drawer.

"Here is something for me to wear" and she tossed a bra, a cotton top and a pair of shorts to the floor. "Now, for you?"

Her hands rummaged again in the drawer and then her right hand arose with a pair of men's white swimming trunks. They looked brand new.

"There, I think that will do it. Never used. They may be a little tight but they will at least look presentable when we return. Put them on!"

Rodney's face said it all. As he watched Polly slip into her bra, top and shorts, he gazed in wonderment at this lady who always seemed to have all of

the answers. He finally stood and pulled the swimsuit on. His mind suddenly clear of fear, he began to prattle.

"Fortunately Maryanne didn't see me wearing that suit" pointing at the pile. "So she won't be suspicious when I come back in this. Oh Polly, I was so worried and -"

"Hush now. Everything is fine. You just had a bad scare and it worked out OK. Fortunately, I keep extra clothes here for just such an emergency."

Until now Rodney had never thought that he might not be the only man she made love to in this vehicle. It had been 'their place' that first night and he always thought of it as 'their place'. Now it was abundantly clear that this was Polly's screwing machine and she kept it stocked for just that purpose. Hadn't she said this was a 'new swimsuit?', fingering the factory fresh draw string.

Polly had also pulled a plastic garbage bag from the same drawer and she was stuffing everything she wore, plus his bathing suit, into the bag. She reached again in the drawer for a tie and secured the bag. And tossed it towards the front of the van, behind her seat.

She moved the single step towards Rodney and took his hands in her own. "OK sport, shall we rejoin the civilized world?" Her lips pressed against his and as if to punctuate the event's final closing seconds she snapped her tongue against his lips and then drove it deeply into his mouth. Rodney had never encountered anyone with such a tongue. He was actually beginning to heat up all over again. Polly ran her hand down his side while steering her tongue throughout his open mouth and rubbed lightly on his crotch.

"Is that a banana in there sailor, or are you just glad to see me?"

The tension now totally gone Rodney laughed for the first time in several

hours. They climbed back into the seats and Polly checked her hair in the sunvisor mirror. From a compartment she took a brush and untangled her dark brown shoulder length locks. Then she returned the brush and took out a small compact case. Stopping to start the engine and run the windows up with the power buttons, she applied new eyeliner and a light coat of slightly pink lipstick.

"Alright Mr. Paul, what do you think? Does this van need to go back to your shop in the states or can we let it stay here for another year of service?"

He smiled at her and reached for her hand. She ignored his outstretched arm and used both of her hands to back the van down the winding driveway to the roadway below. They didn't speak another word nor touch until she pulled up in front of the garage. Rodney started to speak as she switched off the motor and opened the door.

"Polly-"

"Arnold" she called, ignoring his voice, "come here. I have something for you."

The Haitian gardner was only feet away and he dropped his rake and ran towards the van. Rodney sat still hoping to finish his sentence as Polly reached behind the seat and dragged the plastic bag filled with clothing across her lap. She thrust it at Arnold.

"Burn these; don't open the bag, don't take anything out. Burn this; do you understand".

"Yes Miss Polly; I burn, now."

"Good." She turned to face Rodney. "We have a dinner appointment at 7. Maybe you have time for a swim?" and she stepped down from the van and

slammed the door behind her. Rodney was left alone in the van he had customized for a drug dealer. Opening the door, he stood looking back inside, his eyes sweeping the full interior. Softly, to himself he reflected on the afternoon.

"There are drugs, and then there are drugs. Who's to say which type is the most debasing?"

end/

Chapter Ten/

Paul's return flight from Grand Turk had been uneventful. He missed the 2 o'clock plane and Jack assured him there would be another at 4. So he spent two hours talking with Jack learning a great deal about his new island home. The Taxi-driver cum Philosopher ~~Jack~~ was a fund of knowledge, most of which he freely shared. In one sequence of exchanges Paul had ~~shot~~ spit out names of people on Portobello ~~at the taxi driver~~, getting responses with thumb nail sketches to each. Jack included a list of people to avoid, where possible. These ~~he~~ Paul would share with Karen as best he might remember. Not a heavy drinker, the multiple Scotch on the rocks he consumed had unfortunately worked against high memory retention.

Now he was driving from the airport back to Golden Shores in the car Avery Burgess ~~had~~ insisted he borrow. The downtown area was filled with people, mostly black and primarily gathered around ~~both banks~~ the two bank buildings and the supermarket owned by Burgess. He thought about Jack's verbal sketch of Burgess as he moved slowly through the rutted downtown main street.

"He most powerful man in country," Jack had begun, "Most people 'fraid of him; ~~I~~ me not. My wife cousin to his wife and he help me many times. I trust him but he have many native enemies. They say he take land from them. I think he buy land from them, give them money when they need it ~~and buy land from them~~. They say he rob them. I think he good businessman and they stupid. When they get smarter, they call him robber. That not right."

Jack had explained how Portobello was a totally forgotten part of the Turks and Caicos chain until the development ~~started~~ began. Until then, people from government virtually never went to Portobello. Government provided no services there until Velma Burgess had returned with her husband Avery and

campaigned for the opening of a medical clinic. More recently the rapid growth of Portobello's tourism facilities had demanded government pay more attention to the island. Jack told him, "Government people, civil servants, very close here. They work same jobs for long time; man who surveyor had father who surveyor before him. Before that, his father's father. Their life easy. Portobello change that. Now new people be hired, some with college. That anger civil servants who see their traditions goin' away. They not like Portobello much."

Paul now better understood the government's reluctance to allow Portobello to develop as a totally open market. They were opposed to the influx of foreigners, especially whites, because of fear. Jack had suggested it to him.

'Suppose Portobello be independent? Maybe Avery Burgess be President. That scare them here. The tail wag the donkey!'

~~He~~ Paul and Karen had been struck by the large number of working, middle-class white Americans and Canadians on the island. They had noticed many of the tourist related shops and businesses, such as scooter rentals, were operated by people much like them. The concept of a free-state, Portobello as an independent nation, had never occured to him. He suspected it was not something people talked about in public. He had to ask himself, "If I lived here and I had a chance to become a citizen of this island while it was becoming a brand new country, how would I vote?"

The traffic slowed as he approached Susie Turn, the road leading away from Leeward Highway towards the Turtle Cove tourist and white enclave region. Ahead he could see several cars stopped at the intersection. A policeman was directing traffic and then he saw why; a scooter was lying on

its side in the middle of the roadway and just feet away a white lady was on the roadway with two white men bending over her. One carried a doctor's satchel. A battered car filled with black people was stopped just left of center line further blocking traffic.

Paul surmised what probably happened. The scooter, driven by a tourist, had turned out of Susie Turn onto the highway. The scooter driver probably had forgotten momentarily where she was and turned directly into the path of the car. He glanced down at the sign posted on his dashboard.

"REMEMBER- WE DRIVE ON THE LEFT!"

From all appearences, the lady had forgotten this. As Paul was motioned past the accident scene by the policeman he could see the injured lady was talking with the two men and they were trying to ~~straighten out~~ manipulate her right leg. This would certainly ruin her holiday, but at least she could return home alive.

Traffic thinned out past Susie Turn and Paul was passing the complex known as Tower Plaza. The nearly one dozen sizeable satellite dishes and the radio broadcasting tower owned by Polly Conner were to his right. He tried to remember what Jack had said about Mrs. Conner.

"Strange lady; she close to Avery Burgess. Many people 'fraid of her. She very different, not like Bill." He had asked him about her late husband.

"He best white man in country. Politicians fear him; that tell me he OK. We good friends. When he die, many people sad. I not sure he dead."

That struck Paul as a strange thing to say. He had asked Jack why he felt Bill Conner was still alive.

"Can't explain; just I think so. He never sick, then he go to Florida and they say he die. He come back some day; I know."

Paul was slowly developing a feel for an islander's inability to distinguish fact from fantasy. It was common for natives here to want to believe something so badly they simply ignored the obvious. Bill Conner apparently had been so well thought of that many natives simply 'knew' he would one day return. He smiled and congratulated himself on his new ability to figure out an island mystery.

The road from Leeward Highway to The Bight, and Golden Shores, was just ahead. For the first time he noticed that although the much traveled Susie Turn leading down to the white area was still unpaved, this unmarked road was paved and well maintained. He pondered "why" would a much less important road be paved?

Then it hit him, "Of course! This road leads to a native settlement and the natives are the ones who vote. No whites vote, even if they are supplying the capital that is fueling Portobello's economic boom." Again he smiled to himself. "Two mysteries in a row solved," he said aloud. "I'm getting the hang of this place now!".

Karen was waiting nervously at the rear door. She had spent the better part of the last hour there, yearning for Paul's quick and safe return. Avery Burgess had driven by once and she had waived and shouted, "He is not back, yet!" Now she saw the borrowed Mazda churning up a cloud of dust on the long roadway leading into Golden Shores. Paul was back!

"Children; Camille, Tony, Bart ... your father is home!" she shouted running to a bathroom mirror to check her hair and dab on new lipstick. The children had been glued to the Disney Channel on cable for at least two hours. All three beat her to the door just as Paul pulled to a stop and climbed out.

"Daddy, daddy, come see my starfish," cried Camille. "And see my big shell," piped up Bart. Both of the younger children flung themselves at Paul and he grabbed Camille and then Bart one at a time and tossed them into the air. Tony waited until the youngest was back on the ground before he approached his dad.

"We had a good day, how was yours?"

Paul reached out to place his hand on his oldest's shoulder as Karen, filled with smiles and enthusiasm, ran through the screened doorway to him. Throwing both arms around Karen and raising her off the sandy ground he twirled his wife but said nothing.

"Welcome home honey; we are so glad you're back. I want to hear everything that happend! How about a drink; maybe Scotch?"

"A Diet Coke perhaps," and setting her down, her eyes told him she knew. He seldom if ever turned down Scotch. "I think I had enough Scotch this afternoon to last awhile; hey!" and he leaned forward to kiss her on the cheek "No problems; everything is fine."

Paul inspected the starfish and conch shells collected by the two smallest Monastos. Karen busied herself in the kitchen with the final preparations of dinner. Tony watched silently and then went to his Mom.

"Mom, I don't think Dad had a good day," he started.

Karen had been increasingly aware of 11 year old Tony's maturity. She also knew he had tried to talk with his father about his more mature concerns and found Paul not ready to accept his son as an almost equal. She tried to make up for Paul's failing; and she meant to talk with him about it. But there never seemed to be an appropriate time to do so.

"I hope you're wrong; but I think so too. If it didn't go well, we may

have to make some real adjustments around here. I hope I can count on you," and she thought quickly to herself, "My God, I have just said this to an 11 year old!".

"You can, Mom," and he hugged his mother warmly. It felt good; Tony was less and less apt to hug or touch either of them now.

Paul interrupted, ~~them~~, pleased to see mother and eldest hugging. He worried about the world he was building for Tony and the younger Monastos.

"Karen, do we have time to take a walk down the beach before dinner?"

She had ~~planned~~ INTENDED to serve dinner early and then isolate she and Paul from the children for the balance of the evening. She now thought better of this plan.

"Of course; let me put this on hold. Do you want to swim or just walk?"

"Walk; I can swim tomorrow."

his last sentence

She looked up quickly at his eyes. 'I ~~can swim tomorrow~~' told her Paul was not planning to start work on Saturday.

"Why don't you wait for me in the hammock on the beach; I'll be just a couple of minutes."

Paul took her hand, squeezed it tightly, and blew a kiss.

As he slid the door shut behind him, Karen began placing a salad and scalloped potatoes into the refrigerator. She had created one of Paul's favorite meals; featuring lasagna from a recipe she had obtained from his mother. The food stored, her apron hung on a hook, she clicked off the kitchen light and went briefly to their bedroom. There she pulled on well-worn tennis shoes; the better for walking on the sandy beach. A quick check in the mirror, a pass of her hair-brush through her forelocks, and a deep breath.

"OK kids, please stay out of the refrigerator. I'm going for a beachwalk with your father. Diet drinks are ok, but no food; I don't want you to ruin your appetite for dinner."

Camille and Bart answered in unison. "OK mom!". Tony had a different message, "Good luck."

The door closed behind Karen and she started across the sand to the hammock. Avery Burgess had trans-planted coconut Palm trees to his beachfront facility and by luck or planning, the trees were properly spaced to loop a hammock. There Paul was suspended in mid-air facing the rapidly blossoming sunset.

"The days are getting longer, Hon. Before we know it, spring will be here."

Paul knew spring to be Karen's favorite time of year. ~~Karen was aware he knew this~~.

She stood by the hammock and took his hand loosely in her own. "I think I like spring best because it means a new beginning, another opportunity to correct for the mistakes of the past."

"I have made so many..."

Karen looked away from the sunset down at her husband. She thought there were tears in his eyes. "We all make mistakes; that's being human. And as we get older, well, we hope and pray we don't make the same ones again."

He swung his legs out of the hammock and it tipped wildly throwing him on the ground. Karen could see he was not injured; only his pride was wounded.

"You say you had enough Scotch?" she mocked, "Tell me about it!"

Extending her hand to her fallen husband, she gently pulled him to his feet. Paul slid his arm around her waist and they started westward into the

sunset plodding slowly in the soft, deep sand. Neither said a word for several minutes. Paul moved to take her hand and spoke first.

"I think I would like to see inside of the Burgess complex," pointing to their left. They were directly in front of the huge Spanish-colonial home which adjoined Golden Shores.

"He came to see me today," began Karen. "He would very much like to talk with you. I told him you were in Grand Turk but I didn't say who you went to see. He says he has cabinet work to be done-"

"God, that's the best news I've heard all day."

Karen knew he wanted to tell her what had happened but she also knew it would come better if he volunteered at least the first part. She bit her lip and said nothing. They walked silently for five full minutes. Then he spoke again.

"I met with Harvey. It was a frightening experience. I don't think that man likes whites at all. I met a man named Jack on Grand Turk and he told me many things about how government runs. He had nothing nice to say about the politicians."

"Jack?"

"Yeh, Jack. I don't know his last name. He drives a cab and he's not a Turks Islander; he's from Haiti. His wife is an islander tho. I wish you had been there with your journalist's mind for photocopying. I also wish I hadn't drunk so much Scotch. I'm afraid I've lost many of the things he told me."

"What Jack said upset you, then?"

"Yeh, it did. But that was only a part of it. I saw Harvey first and that upset me more. I can't really describe how he made me feel."

"Try."

"Well, he is a big black man and this office he has is so run down and badly equipped I can't imagine how government works at all here. I guess if the other ministers are like him, they do everything out of their back pockets. It was not impressive at all. His office was filled with hundreds of file folders all scattered about."

"Go on."

"When I met him at The Erebus last fall, he was friendly and very intent on helping us. Today he told me my problems were my problems and I couldn't expect any help from him. He gave me a set of papers with instructions; I still haven't read them all. And then his cousins..."

"Cousins? What cousins?"

"Oh, I forgot. He told me that I am not working for him. It also seems his original offer to be a 50-50 partner in the business is gone. I am working for his office manager, only, it is not supposed to be his office manager..."

Karen pulled on his hand to stop their walking. She was hopelessly confused and she needed his full attention.

"Paul, I know this is tough but so far I have a picture of a physically large black man in a dirty office intimidating you. That's it. Let's start over, OK?"

Paul looked at Karen and then at the sunset. The words had been flowing from his mouth and they hadn't been very coherent. He took a deep breath.

"Now I wish I had that Scotch!" They both laughed. Karen was so patient and he appreciated it. She was also a top-notch investigative reporter and he knew before their conversation was over she would have all of the facts

neatly catalogued. He was depending on her to re-arrange his day's report into a coherent fashion and ultimately repeat it back to him. Then he too would know what had really happened to him that day.

"OK, here goes. I went to Harvey's ~~office~~ Ministry and it was empty. He was on the phone and when I went into his private office, it was like I described; barely functional, dirty, and overrun with file folders.

"He was curt and, I felt, abusive. I would start a sentence and he would stop me and tell me what I was about to say; even when that was not what I was thinking.

" He said I worked for him; he made no reference to our handshake partnership. He said that I must tell nobody, not even you, I worked for him. I am to report to his office manager, a man named Gonzalez according to the papers he gave me. He gave me a list of three people who need cabinet work done and told me to see each and work out the details. I am to collect 50% of each job up front. He said I will be paid 20% of each job, half of which we get when I turn in the 50% down payment, and the rest at the end. He also said that if the customer didn't like the work and didn't pay for it I would not get anymore on that job."

"Hold on," interjected Karen. "Suppose somebody says they are going to deduct $100 from a job because they don't like the handles. Does that mean you don't get anymore at all?"

Paul paused, thinking. "Well, I guess it could mean that..."

"That's frightening. Can you remember even one job where there was not some price adjustment at the end? It's human nature to complain; people do it all of the time because nothing ever goes just perfectly."

"If this is correct, our take could be just 10% of a complete job then?"

"I don't want to sound like a soothsayer but that is how I would interpret what you are telling me. Especially when you consider the rest of what you are saying. Please go on."

"It gets worse. He told me he was sending one or two men, people he said were his cousins, to work for me next week. He was very insistent they will be taught the cabinet ~~maker~~ making trade. I got the overwhelming feeling I cannot fire these guys and they are there to keep an eye on me."

"Why do you feel that?"

"He said he wanted them to become cabinet makers, and he used the word 'fast'. Right after that he told me how grateful he was ~~I~~ that me, a white man, would come to his country to teach his people my trade. It was very clear to me he looked upon me as an interim visitor, here just long enough to make him some money and teach his cousins this trade."

"You said you don't think he likes whites?"

"Oh yeh, when he gave me the list of cabinet clients he said most of my work would be for rich white guys. He said it as if he didn't even consider me white. It was an insult to hear it, it was as if I didn't count for being white, or even a human being."

"What else?"

"Well, Jack filled me in on how the politicians, including Harvey, were so busy making money on this island that they had all but abandoned Grand Turk. I liked Grand Turk, it is very quaint and it could be a real tourist spot. But the people there seem to be in another world; very laid back, and all very bitter towards Portobello. I felt sorry for them; they were once the center of the country and now they have lost that. There isn't much left on Grand Turk."

"This Jack ... why would you put much stock in what he said? I don't mean to sound discourteous to the man, but a taxi driver on an island where everyone dislikes Portobello; why would anything he had to say be more than just amusing to you?"

This was a tough question. Karen knew how to get to the core of something with a sharp paring knife. How could he explain the strength of his feeling after talking with Jack? Then it came to him.

"It was uncanny. This guy I barely knew told me not to work for Harvey and not to trust a politician, after just a few minutes of casual conversation. Here's the frightening part. He knew Harvey had helped me with the work and residency permits and more than that, he also told me who the attorney was that we used for those applications."

"He knew? You mean you told him, or he got clues from what you said and he figured it out?"

"No, no. God I wish you had been there yourself. He just flat out told me Harvey was the guy who got me the permits and Scott did the paperwork. He just knew!"

"Somebody obviously told him this."

"I wish you had been there hon; nobody told him. He just knew. He also told me that almost no white person gets a work permit anymore. He said that only those who have benefactors, in government, like Harvey, got permits now. I can't explain how errie this was. I remember I was drinking a beer with Jack and all of a sudden I got this feeling I had been sold into servitude. This black master, Harvey, now owned my life; our lives, and I had to do just what he said or we were out of here."

Karen dropped his hand and took a step back. She knew Paul as well as she

knew herself. This man had been truly frightened and he was still frightened. He had every reason to be paranoid; nothing he had touched in business ~~for more than~~ FOR ten years had provided more then temporary success. They had lived from emotional high to emotional high, always predicated on some new contract or job he had gotten. Each new job had provided new energy and new hope; and as each had turned to disaster Paul had left more and more of his confidence behind in the depressive depths of each successive failure.

Good

They had literally run away to Portobello hoping to break the endless cycle of emotional highs and depressive failures. Standing before her, Paul was heading for depression even before the new work started. She had a choice; try to mend his wounds of the day and send him charging off to build cabinets for Harvey, or find an alternate plan that would bind the family together. She needed more time to think it out, more options.

"Paul, everything you have told me is alarming. But let's remember first of all we are no longer in Canada. This country is populated by black people and I am sure there are many reasons they have not to like whites. We have to accept that for the first time we are a minority. This is their country, and they will run it as they see fit. We can accept their ways, maybe even adjust our own. Or, we can leave. Right now I don't think we have any good options for leaving. So let's explore our what we do have."

"You said Avery came by and he wants cabinets made?"

"Yes. I think he is anxious to see you; I know he is," remembering his drive-by visit later in the day.

"OK, tomorrow morning ~~I will~~ I'll go to see him. OK?"

"I think you should telephone him tonight, when we get back, and make an

appointment to see him. You may even get your chance to see inside of his estate!"

He smiled again; Karen could barely make out the details of his face in the rapidly fading twilight.

"Now, how about that Scotch and some dinner?"

Paul moved closer and wrapped his arms around his petite wife. Both hands rubbed the depths of her back and she shivered the length of her body. This was the man she loved; strong, confident, tender. She wriggled her own hands free and cupped his face. Gently she drew his lips to hers and they lingered together for what seemed like an eternity. The day's sun was now completely gone and a waning half moon stood sentry above Grace Bay.

Paul's mind collapsed of thought as he realized, "If there is a paradise on earth, this is it. Right here, right now."

end/

Chapter 11

On a normal Saturday morning Avery Burgess would arise early, no later than 6AM, and go directly to the family owned shopping center. When he and Velma returned to Portobello in 1972, a small grocery store operated by two brothers from Florida was open. The store owners arrived on the heels of the developers; the handful of new residents, white, needed a place to buy supplies. More over, the Portobello natives employed by the developers to build roads and learn the skills of carpentry and masonry now had money to spend. It was a familiar cycle; men quit fishing and farming to be paid in dollars for their skills. Now they could no longer feed their families from the harvest of sea and soil. So they took their dollars to the store to purchase flour, meat and fish, even vegtables which just a few years before had been locally grown.

They had been back just a month and Avery was battling to get his fish processing plant functional. He came home to their tiny quarters one day to find Velma pouring over catalogs and humming a tune.

"What's that?" he had asked.

"Food catalogs" she had answered.

"No, the tune you are humming; it sounds familiar".

"You know how I love music. Petula Whiteborn gave me a stack of old American records today and I found it there. It's a song by Tennessee Ernie Ford. Do you remember him?"

Avery did not.

"The words go something like this. 'Sixteen ~~miles~~ TONS AND WHAT DO YOU GET, ANOTHER DAY OLDER, and deeper in debt. I owe my soul to the company store'."

Avery did not see what the relevance of any of this was. She had

proceeded to tell him.

"Our people are now working for Portobello, Limited. They all think they are suddenly in the 20th century. They work hard six days building roads and houses. Then they are too exhausted to maintain their farms, or even fish. So they take the dollars to the company store and they buy food. It is a vicious cycle. Just yesterday you said to me how outrageous the prices are at the Portobello Industries store. We are going to do something about this," and with a flourish she spread her hands across the catalogs covering the table.

They had planned the first small grocery store for years; waiting until the fishery was operating comfortably and in the black. Then she and Avery had journied to Florida to investigate the purchase of wholesale foodstuffs. Ultimately they would go into the fuel business for the very same reason; to break the rigid circle of the developers ~~of~~ surrounding the island's natives.

The 1990 version of Island Groceries was the third generation facility from the first small store. Each had been larger than the predecessor. On a busy Saturday, the present store would gross as much as $100,000; more than they took in ~~for~~ in the first six months at the original store. Already, the next generation store was on the drawing boards and the present site was less than 3 years old. Avery Burgess now had three nominal competitors, but his store accounted for more than 80% of all foodstuffs sold on the island. He intended not to lose that dominate position.

This Saturday morning he had two meetings which he elected to conduct in his private office at home. One was with Gus Harvey, the elder statesman of Portobello. The second was with Paul Monasto.

Avery's home had been intended to be a self contained world. He had

liked how Bill Conner designed a 'complex' of buildings, each with a function but all contained inside of a massive fence. He didn't intend to copy Bill; it just turned out that way. Aside from the rambling home, there was a garage for four vehicles plus an extensive workshop. Avery had never forgotten how to use hand tools and he prided himself on this. Adjacent to the pool was a guest house with two separate apartments, plus a day-change room where guests could change, shower, or just escape. Finally, there was "his building"; a matching Spanish style one floor building that appeared to have but three rooms. There were actually five, two hidden from the outside and even Velma did not have keys to these rooms. The inner most of the rooms had been built with 36-inch thick steel re-enforced poured concrete walls. Entry, if you could locate the door ~~through~~ at the back of a closet, ~~that~~ ~~also~~ ~~always~~ ~~stayed~~ lock was through a 24-inch thick custom steel door and airlock. A sub-roof over the two inner rooms was also 36 inch thick steel beam re-enforced poured concrete. Avery had engaged a firm in Florida that claimed to have built underground Strategic Air Command control rooms to design the two inner rooms. The rooms had their own air filtration, power, communications and water plus food stores. Avery was ready; just in case the world decided to go upside down. Ten people could live there for two months in modest comfort.

The three visible rooms in his building included an accounting room where two very loyal Burgess-trained Portobello native women kept his multi-corporate books, an office for himself and an office which he allowed his eldest son Alton to use. Gus was to meet him in this home office at 8 AM.

Gus Harvey was feeling the traditional pangs of age plus a fear of the unknown as he drove from his Blue Hills home to Avery's home this Saturday

morning. Twenty years ago he would awaken all filled with enthusiasm and energy to get on with the day. Ten years ago his eyesight had begun to fail and if Portobello's driver's license exam included an eyesight test, Gus would have failed years ago. He wore 1/2 inch thick bifocals to see the hand in front of his face; when he drove, he found he could slip another pair over the top of the bi-focals to improve his ability to see the road and traffic. Gus was often asked by tourists why he wore two pairs of glasses at the same time. He had created a funny line to put them at ease.

"I put these on, you black." he would say. "Now everyone the same!"

Gus's mind was on black today. His black cousin Samuel from the Bahamas, to be specific. When Samuel appeared in his living room early on Christmas, Gus had been tempted to tell Samuel he was nearly 30 years too late. But something told him not to do this. He thought about this for several days and then had arranged an appointment with Avery Burgess.

If Samuel's decription of the property he claimed his father farmed was accurate, it would be located between The Bight and the beach. That would have been poor farming land in the 40's and 50's except for one thing; the water. Government had dug a solitary well for The Bight around 1948 as best Gus could trace. Natives in The Bight had to walk through nearly a half mile of bush to gather a pail or skin of water to carry back to their homes. It was woman and child work; men never hauled water except in an emergency. If someone had a farm near to the well, as Samuel suggested, the farm might have been productive simply because of the water, and inspite of the alkaline, sandy soil.

None of this changed the legal requirements of Samuel's father coming forth in the early 60's to register his claim on the land. What made all of

this intertesting was that on that site, now, Sheraton Hotels was completing a large hotel and casino. And most important of all, this very land had been bought for the hotel not from government but from Avery Burgess. Gus didn't know why or how, but he thought someplace in this situation Avery would like to get involved. This was his mission for the morning.

"Is that you Gus? Come in" Avery called from inside his office. Gus seldom came to the Burgess 'farm', as the natives called it facetiously. Only once before had he been in this building. It reminded him of a doctor's office in Miami; everything was so immaculate, modern and ~~almost~~ seemingly on display. One of his daughter's-in-law worked here; Jenny was Avery's head bookkeeper. She never, ever, talked about work in the family. She would always leave the room at home if the talk turned to Avery Burgess. Jenny was perhaps the highest paid woman native on this island; Gus had no idea how much she earned, even his son Tom claimed not to know.

Jenny had not turned to greet or face Gus when he entered. She only looked up now after he had passed her desk to enter Avery's office.

"Come in, shut the door, Gus," instructed Avery. "This is a morning when I would like to be fishing."

Gus beamed. "Oh yes, I like to fish too. But these tired eyes," and he took off his glasses to illustrate, "They can't see to bait the hook anymore."

"You were a good fisherman, once. Remember?"

"I remember; I catch more fish than anyone. I feed my family and have twice again left over to trade. That why my family do so well because I trade good."

Avery smiled as Gus placed his glasses, with some difficulty, back over

his nose. ~~Avery~~ He noticed Gus was having trouble even finding his nose to set the glasses down.

"You say you have an old land problem, Gus. What is it?"

Gus related the Christmas morning visit of cousin Samuel. Avery was noticeably uninterested until Gus mentioned where the piece of land might be. Avery set upright in his tall swivel backed chair and leaned forward with ~~his~~ elbows on his glass-topped mahogony desk.

"You say, where the first Bight well was located?"

"Yes, that is what Samuel say. But you know Sheraton-"

"Yes, yes." Avery paused, thinking. "Of course, Gus, nobody knows better than you Samuel's father should have come forth back in - was it 1962 and 63? - yes, nearly 30 years ago, to register his claim. You told him this?"

"I mention but Samuel, he not hear. Not understand."

"I see." Avery leaned back in his desk and clasped his hands together on his lap.

Avery thought about how he came to own the land. No native had registered for the property in question so ownership reverted to the Crown. The land was registered as a parcel that included more land immediately next door. He AND sat on a part of ~~the~~ this original section right now; land where he built Golden Shores, then Golden Shores Condominiums, and most recently his own home. He had acquired legal title to the full section by complying with a government offer in 1974 to develop a hotel facility. In those days government had been so anxious to get some sort of tourism facilities started they offered north shore beach front land, outside of the 4,000 acres deeded to the white developers, in return for someone building

lodging quarters. He had built 6 buildings over three years, each with a

pair of two bedroom apartments. His had been the first non-white owned and non-developer controlled lodging on the island.

The government offer had been that if you needed six acres to build on, and you met your building pledge, they would then deed you the property. Avery had been 'fortunate'; he built on six acres but received more than 30 acres in all. And of those 30, he had later sold 15 to Sheraton for a very handsome price in the mid 80s. price or decade?

"Gus, who else has Samuel talked with about this?"

"I not know; only me I think."

Avery doubted that. So too did Gus. Avery feared what might already be happening. In the native quarter, he saw Samuel telling people how his daddy's land had been 'stolen'. Somebody would tell him the Sheraton was building there; somebody else would remember the Sheraton bought the land from Avery Burgess. Avery was prepared to defend his right to it. But, each time this sort of thing happened he became more and more ostracized by his native community. And, there was the small matter of his having built on 6 acres and being deeded 30. The Governor himself had arranged this, but even so, Avery didn't need a query into the matter.

"Gus, I think it is a dead issue. Samuel must be made to understand his daddy had an opportunity like everyone else in the Bahamas to come forth. When he did not do so, his rights went back to the Crown. Now, tell you what I will do. Samuel probably needs a job. Ask him to reach me Monday morning at the grocery store, OK? Tell him I will try to find him a job."

Gus was actually relieved. Had his eyesight been better, he would have read Avery's face and seen the concern. Going only on what he heard, he was

happy to be able to go back to Samuel and promise, well almost promise, him

work. Samuel should be happy; Gus hoped.

"OK, I tell him. He have hard time understanding how much this country change since his daddy live here. I try to make him happy." With that Gus rose and headed for the closed door.

"Gus, one more thing. I don't think any good will be served by bringing back the land problems of the 60s. There may be talk on the street about this if Samuel has been talking. Try to calm it down, OK?"

Gus stopped with his hand on the doorknob. "I try." He opened the door and was gone.

Avery had promised to call Paul Monasto as soon as he was finished with Gus. It was now almost 8:30. He wanted to think about this visit just a few minutes before he saw Monasto. He called out to his front office. "Jenny, will you call Paul Monasto in unit 7 and tell him to come in 15 minutes?"

"Yes Mr. B," came the response. Burgess allowed just a few, close trusted employees to address him in that way. Avery told people when they could do this; it was like receiving a promotion in the organization to have this honor.

He rose to shut his own door. Outside he could see Rose with David and Susie McClaskey poolside. He would miss Rose; he hoped to have the Olympic training facility well underway when they returned over Easter. A roll of drawings for the McClaskey's four bedroom, 3 bath home were on a couch nearby. The final cost estimate of the project was tacked on top of the plans. All told, nearly $900,000. In 2002 he would be 68; still young enough to lead the Turks and Caicos delegation to the Olympics; wherever that might be.

Avery's knees were only marginally better than Gus's eyes. He had been to

Miami, and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester six times to have them repaired. Tendons and both knee caps were virtually destroyed by rapid degeneration caused by youthful injuries. It hurt to walk but he still paced back and forth when wrestling with a problem. The thick pile carpet on his office floor helped but his knees clicked with each step. He imagined those around him could hear each snap, crackle and pop; but he knew they could not. With the door shut, in his own office, he talked to himself, out loud. He could afford to do that; he had designed it to be totally soundproof.

"Alright Lord, is this a problem or not? Let's suppose the worst. Who would like to make an issue of this? Not the British, certainly. Not Sheraton. A handful of native malcontents surely will. There are people in the GDP who would like me to have a mess. Suppose this got to them?"

What's GDP?

He stopped talking out loud.

"Harvey," he thought to himself. "Samuel Harvey. Gus is his cousin. So too is Lawrence Harvey."

"What would Larry Harvey do if he heard this? Would he go back to check the land deeds of the 70s to see how many acres I received for building Golden Shores? Possibly. We have to assume the worst here to be prepared. And if he discovered I received 30 acres rather than 6 or 7, then what? He could try to find out who approved this and he would run directly into a 1977 Governor Williams' signature. Would he then accuse the British of giving away Crown land to me? Probably. The GDP never misses a chance to make the British look bad. What's the best defense?"

He stopped pacing and smiled. "Of course, the best defense is a strong offense," he said aloud. "Governor Burnside said to me only last week he is

looking for an opportunity to deflate the GDP sails a bit. The British are

very good about hanging a local elected official out to dry as a warning to the other politicians. Maybe it's time to hang out one Lawrence Harvey!"

Avery was sitting quietly lost in thought when there was a knock on his door. "Who is it?" he called.

"Paul Monasto, sir" came the reply.

"Come in."

Paul entered and was immediately impressed. The furnishings were immaculate; he had never been in such a well appointed office before. It was the kind of functional office he imagined real world multi-millionaires had. As he walked towards the chair where Avery was gesturing his eyes took in the room itself. Something just didn't quite fit. Was it the size and shape of the room? Perhaps. No, it was something else.

"First, may I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all of the kindnesses you are showing to my family and me?" he began.

"Please sit down" offered Avery. "As I told your wife yesterday, my wife and I still remember how difficult it was to come back home and start over. I can appreciate how little things, like getting around this island without a car, can affect your early days here. Frankly, we need people with skills such as yours. I appreciate this fact even if some others may not. I believe you should be welcomed here, made comfortable, and given every opportunity to succeed. Unfortunately not everyone here agrees with this view."

Paul could scarcely believe these words. They were so different than his abusive treatment in Harvey's office just yesterday morning. He was so relieved he blurted out, "I met somebody yesterday who doesn't think that way."

Avery sat back in his chair. "Lawrence Harvey."

For some reason Paul was not surprised to hear this name.

"Yes, the Minister of Natural Resources."

"Let me be ~~quite frank~~ STRAIGHT FORWARD with you. May I call you Paul?"

"Yes, of course."

"Paul, we have a government here which is in deeply over their collective heads. I myself only attended school through high school, so I have no quarrels with self made men who have no formal higher education. However, our Chief Minister never went beyond the 8th grade, and the average school level of our six ministers is the 9th grade. Their average age is 38. Only one of these people, Larry Harvey, has been in business for himself. These are not bright or even street smart people. All politicians make mistakes; dumb mistakes. These are unfortunately dumb people making the same mistakes over and over again. I tell you all of this because I want your full attention to what I have to say to you. I'm certain you are bright enough not to repeat any of this conversation outside of this room; agreed?"

Paul did not hesitate. "Agreed."

"Let me tell you what I know. They say you are a skillful cabinet maker. I understand your work in Toronto was way above average. I also understand you do not have a head for business; you are at your best when you deal with the product and not the finances.

"I believe you came here and met Lawrence Harvey and he somehow talked you into going into the cabinet and finishing business with him. He offered you some sort of deal, say a 50-50 deal, to run the shop he has next to the airport. You went back to Canada, sold everything you owned, packed up your family and came here ready to start a new business. Harvey arranged for your

work and residency permit. Harvey has also purchased around $70,000 in new

wood working equipment. You probably do not know he paid $15,000 down on this equipment and the rest is on a relatively short time payment plan. He has to clear $6,000 a month from your business just to make his equipment payments.

"How am I doing so far?"

Paul was even more stunned than he had been with Jack. 'Are there no secrets on this damn island?' he asked himself. 'And Harvey made ME promise never to reveal he was my boss???'

"I cannot correct a thing, but I am overwhelmed-"

"May I continue?"

Paul nodded. ~~agreement.~~

"Your assignment from Harvey is to make him lots of money. He needs it, fast. Not just for this business, but to fund the many others he has undertaken on this island. You have probably figured out by now that Harvey holds your work permit and residency in his hands. If he says 'go' to you, your only question is 'on which plane, sir'?"

Avery paused and Paul nodded bewildered agreement.

"So you are here with your lovely wife Karen and three promising children. You are a white person in a black country. You have no vote, you have few legal rights, and your presence here is subject to the whim of a local politician or two. I apologize for making you nervous; but you must face these issues squarely if you are to succeed here."

"I was nervous when I came in here; I have been very nervous ever since I met Harvey yesterday. You are not shocking me; this simply reaffirms what Karen and I feared."

"Then I will now try to reduce your nervousness. I can help you. I can

solve this problem."

"Why should you want to do this for me? I mean, every plane that lands here must have a family just like the Monastos on board. You can't help everyone of these; why us?"

"I will be frank. My people in Toronto say your work is excellent. They say the finishing work you did on the front counters at the Bank of Toronto's new branch in Rexdale is superb.

"I need your skills; this country needs your skills. Not just for one job or one year; we need them as a base to train our own future cabinet people.I realize this will take time; I understand this.

"Everything I have built here I have tried to build with local labor. But as each new project has grown successively more complicated, I have found our own shortcomings more and more difficult to resolve. You know the Bank of Nova Scotia?"

"Yes, downtown in the same building as Island Groceries."

"I was ten weeks late in turning over those quarters to the bank. For one reason only. My contracting company was finished, on time. I tried to turn the facility over to ~~them~~ The bank as they required and ~~the bank~~ They refused to accept it. Can you guess why?"

Paul thought he could but he preferred to let Burgess tell him.

"Tell me."

"Because the counters and the doors and doorways and baseboard finish ~~was~~ WER not up to ~~their~~ BANK standards. They refused to occupy the building until they felt it carried the finished, prestige look they demand. That ten week delay cost me lease payments; but more important, it taught me a lesson. My people

can build a good strong building, quite fast by island standards. But

neither my people nor anyone else on this island can complete the finish work to North American standards. Do you want proof of that? Look around you, in this room."

Avery pushed himself back from the desk and rose.

"Come here; look at the way this door jam fits. Now, over here, see how the window frame is crooked. I have measured it and it is 1 inch out at the top. And this is my office; my office! Nobody on this island wants it perfect more than I. But I was forced to finally accept it like this because had I held out for perfect, I would still not be using this office. Now, do you understand?"

Now Paul knew what it was about the room that ~~had~~ bothered him when he entered. The room's appointments were first class; the room itself had been skillfully designed and ~~probably~~ constructed. But The finish work was third rate, although Burgess had done an excellent job covering up the flaws with furniture placements, drapes and plants. They both sat down again.

"I understand. And yes, I do much better work. ~~than that~~. Tell me, how did you finally get the bank so they would accept it?"

"Against intense local pressure, I brought in two skilled craftsmen from the states. They had to work at night behind draped windows so the locals would not see them. For six weeks they worked at night and slept in the daytime. I never want that experience again."

"Are you then offering me longterm employment to work for you?"

"Not exactly." Avery looked at Paul's face for sign of emotion. There was none.

"I am offering you the opportunity you probably thought you had with

Harvey when you arrived here. Was it 50-50?"

"Yes, it was."

"I don't do things 50-50 with anybody. I am in control. It will be 60-40 but you will carry your own work permit and residency permit as a way of making you more comfortable. I don't want you worried I will call you one day and tell you to leave. But if we have a falling out, there will be an agreement stating how much money you receive if I elect to buy you out. Or in reverse, how much you pay me for my interest. Fair?"

"More than fair. But the work permit and residency - I understood no more are being issued and only a government minister can get one through now?"

Avery smiled. "Did Harvey tell you that?"

"No, not exactly. But it is true, isn't it?

"That is true. Don't you think I can persaude someone to do that for us?"

Paul felt very embarassed. Hadn't Jack said 'Avery Burgess most powerful man in country'? Of course he could handle that!

"I'm sorry, I didn't think - this is all so overwhelming,"

Avery smiled. "I believe in the United States they have a saying. 'There is the Army way and there is the right way'. Here there is the normal way, and there is the Burgess way!"

"This all seems to simple. But what will I tell Harvey? He does hold my work and residency permits."

"Up to now you could believe or not believe the things I told you. From this point on you must either accept as gospel what I say, or turn and leave the room. You must do exactly as I tell you; there can be no variation. No-one, including Karen, is to know what I say to you next. Is that understood?"

Paul felt a twinge of remembrance from the day prior. 'No' he thought to

himself, 'there is no comparison. I am totally comfortable with Burgess; I was totally uncomfortable with Harvey when the conversation took on the same tone.'

"I understand; if I have trouble with it, I will tell you so."

"Good. On Monday morning I want you to go to Harvey's business just as if you were reporting for duty. Do your very best to do everything as you would if you were there to be a part of the business. Don't go light on anything you do. OK so far?"

"Yes, but I don't understand-"

"You will, shortly. Sometime in the next ten days there is going to be an official British government inquiry started into Harvey's affairs. I cannot predict what he may do when this starts. I suspect he'll ~~will~~ do everything he can to hide certain dealings he has and he may even come to you and say 'OK Paul, leave the country'. Now, if he does not come to tell you to leave, you'll ~~will~~ then get a call or message from me telling you the same thing. In other words keep a bag packed when this starts. And if you have trouble getting a seat on Pan Am when this happens, call me; I'll get you one."

"You mean I will one day be told to leave, and I should leave? What about Karen and the kids?"

"Hear me out. They will not be affected by what happens. Nobody will pressure or bother them. Either Harvey will want you gone, so you cannot be questioned by the British, or, I will want you gone for the same reason."

"I can't leave my family here-"

"It will be just for a few days, a week at the most. You will stay in touch with me and I suggest you simply go to a Miami hotel and relax. Now,

when the way is clear for you to return, you will find a new work permit in

your own name and a new residency permit in Karen's hands when she greets you."

"It all sounds so, well, James Bondish. And so simple, Do you want to tell me why we are doing this?"

Avery smiled and Paul could not help but smile back. It was obvious Avery was totally in control of everything and Paul suddenly felt a great pressure released from his shoulders.

"Someday I may tell you. For the moment you are a pawn in a political struggle. There are two more things."

Paul blinked. 'Had he saved the worst for last?' Avery went on without acknowledgement.

"First, today, I want you to go back to your unit and sit down with a legal pad and pen and write out exactly what your original arrangement with Harvey was, and as closely as you can remember, a report on your meeting with him yesterday. Bring this back to me as soon as you are finished. Sign it and date it. Do not address it to me; address it to His Excellency Governor Martin Burnside." He tossed Paul a fresh legal pad.

"You mean I am turning state's evidence?"

Avery broke into deep peels of laughter. "Yes, yes...state's evidence. That is very good. Burnside will enjoy that!"

Paul waited for the laughter to subside. "And the second thing?"

"It concerns Karen. I am told she was once a most promising radio and television journalist in Canada; is that true?"

"Well, she was very good. And she did give that up when Tony, our oldest, was born. But what-?"

"This country needs a professional journalist. I want Karen to agree to

go to work for Mrs. Conner's radio stations as soon as she can work out the details with Pauline Conner."

"But why?" Paul was aghast. Karen would never agree to this! He took a deep breath. Avery could see he had finally said something Paul could not accept.

"Why? For the same reason I need you. This country needs you; this country needs a professional news person reporting on our daily activities. I have already spoken to Mrs. Conner about this and if you can't speak for Karen now, I urge you to go home and talk with her. Tell me your answer when you bring back your 'state's evidence'. OK?"

'Well' thought Paul 'If this country is always like this, life was not going to be dull! Imagine how intriguing it could be when he and Karen actually got established and had their roots sunk in.'

"Again, I am overwhelmed," he began. "You are offering me what I suspect is the best opportunity I have ever had."

Avery added, "And possibly ever will have."

"Yes, that too. I agree to everything and it should go without saying I must trust you 100 percent or I might as well pack our bags and take us back to cold Toronto. Well, I agree about Karen but this is her decision. She hasn't worked for years and she had no intention of doing so here. ~~I will~~ I'll go ~~now to~~ AND try to convince her why this is best for her. But you have me sworn to secrecy on parts of this and that won't make it any easier."

"Do you trust your wife?"

"Explicitly. Yes, of course I do!"

"Is she a chatterbox; does she gossip?"

"No, that's one thing she learned as a journalist. You never talk about

things you know in confidence or you will lose your confidential sources."

"Is that the way she is, or that's the way you think it should be for a journalist?"

"That's the way she is."

"Now I know more than ever we need her professional skills. Our local newspaper editor is, well, not as professional as this".

"Alright, if you are certain this is her way, then you have my permission to share any part of our conversation with her. But only to the extent this will help her make-up her mind she will work for Mrs. Conner. Agreed?"

"Agreed."

"Good; now, it is 9:30. When can I expect you back here?"

"Noon?"

"Too soon. I want your statement accurate and I want you to have sufficient time to properly prepare Karen. Shall we say 5 this afternoon?"

Avery rose from behind his desk, limping, and moved to the front. Paul stood to meet him.

"I have another saying; here, let me have your hand."

Paul extended his hand, limply, not uncertain what was coming next. This was such an unpredictable man Paul would not have been surprised to have him press a sharp pin into his palm. Avery reached under the back of Paul's hand to hold it. With his free palm he lightly rubbed his own palm across Paul's.

"One hand washes the other. Your hand is white, my hand is black. In the eyes of God, we are equal."

Avery stared directly into Paul's eyes. He did not look away. They stood there for ten seconds and then Avery slipped his hands away.

"Thank you for coming to see me."

And Paul without any forethought said something he hadn't said out loud in years. "God bless you." And he turned to walk back to unit seven at Golden Shores.

end/

"

Chpt. 12

Karen prided herself on being an optimist. "Things work out for the best" was now one of her most repeated sayings. Unconsciously, she had changed over the years. When she was an aspiring broadcast journalist, her favorite saying had been "Hell no, it doesn't have to be that way!". And she meant it; to the point that as she dug deeper and deeper into local crime and political stories people in authority would call her superior to suggest she be told to 'back off'. Karen's incisive, fact-filled investigative reporting pushed her rapidly from a cub reporter for a local CBC outlet in Barrie, Ontario to editor in chief for CBC News in Toronto.

Paul's defeats mellowed her; but she didn't realize this. Over the years she had gradually become more and more accepting of 'things will be the way they are'.

When Paul left to visit Avery Burgess at 8:40, she noted the time and told herself this could be one of the longest waits she had endured since the birth of Bart. Everyone had told her childbirth grew easier with each new baby. They had lied; Bart kept her in the labor room for 19 hours, more than twice that of Tony or Camille. After kissing Paul warmly good bye and fighting back both tears and the strong urge to say 'Good Luck', she had watched him walk the 300 yards across the sandy driveway to Avery's front gate.

"The kids are on the beach; the house is clean. Now, what will I do?" she had pondered. Fifteen minutes later she realized suddenly all of their clothing was spread out on the three beds in the two bedrooms, and she was actually preparing to pack it all. But for what reason?

When the truth dawned she sat down on the floor in the children's bedroom and began to sob. "I am packing us to return to Toronto" she cried out loud.

"I am giving up; I have no confidence left in Paul. Oh God, please forgive me!". For nearly 25 minutes she cried in spurts. She tried to stop crying; she could not. Slipping out of her dress, sobbing, she stepped into the shower turning the water on full, cold. And she huddled there shivering for ten full minutes until eventually the tears and sobbing subsided.

"Hon, Karen, I'm back! Karen, are you here?" It was Paul.

"What the hell is this?" he yelled seeing their clothing spread over two bedrooms. "Are you - is that you, in the shower?"

Maybe she heard him, maybe she didn't. When she tried to reconstruct her feelings hours later, she would be unable to say for sure. Paul walked to the bathroom and peered inside the running shower. There stood Karen under a stream of cold water, her hands tightly clenched between her breasts, her face bent over into her inter-twined fingers. Instinctively he had ripped open the shower curtain, fumbled for the water control and then dragged her out.Finding her nearly spastic from shaking in the cold flow he gently wrapped her body in a large beach towel, and lifted her in his arms. The bed was covered with clothes so he retreated, heading for the living room couch. Half over his shoulder, legs dangling in front of him, she was sobbing again softly. In all of the years they had lived together, Paul had never seen her in such a state. He was frightened.

Laying her softly onto the couch and doing his best to wrap her in the towel, he tried talking to her.

"Karen, snap out of it. Everything is OK; I am here and everything is fine. Hon, please; I promise. Please talk to me!"

Gradually her sobbing stopped as Paul rubbed her legs, her arms and then her stomach with his perspiring hands. Her eyes had been wide open all of

this time, the pupils wide and oversized. After what seemed an eternity to Paul, she did speak.

"Are we alright?" she asked. "Please dear God, are we alright, now?" She was staring directly into her husband's face but he had the feeling she was looking through him; that she didn't even see him. He placed the tips of his fingers on her lips and rubbed gently.

"Karen, this is Paul. I am right here and everything is alright. I have just returned from Avery's house and I have so much to tell you. It is alright, it is good, I promise."

Karen closed her eyes and Paul was genuinely afraid she might be losing consciousness, or worse. Should he call a doctor? The clinic?

He stood staring at her face and comparing her own breathing cycle with his own, as Camille and Bart pounced onto the back porch. Paul was so intent with Karen he did not notice the children's presence.

"Wait 'til mommy sees this shell!" enthused the girl. "Mommy wants to make a shell collection in our new house."

"I bet she likes this one best!" challenged her younger brother. "It has so many pretty colors."

Karen's eyes opened and she swiveled her head to look first at the children through the glass door, then up at Paul. He broke into a wide grin when he realized she was awake, conscious, and aware of his presence.

"The kids..." she began.

"God dam, you had me worried. Are you alright?" He didn't move an inch for fear of breaking the spell.

"The kids, they shouldn't see me like this." She reached out her hand to raise herself off the couch, and promptly fell back.

"Let me help" and he stepped forward to provide an arm for support. "You look great, now; don't worry about the kids".

Camille shoved the door open and it stuck on the sand that coated the bottom rail of the door frame. "Daddy, will you help me, please?" she called.

"Just a minute dear; as soon as mom gets into the bathroom." Now he assisted Karen in walking and it was obvious to both she needed his support. She was very weak from the trauma of her experience.

Reaching the door, Karen suggested "Tell them I will be out in a few minutes." Paul looked concerned about leaving her. "No, it is OK. I'm OK now, and I'll be out in a jiffy." She reached up to snuggle against him and planted a kiss on his cheek. The towel wrapping her body fell to the floor and Paul could not resist pinching her bottom as he returned the hug.

He backed away and started to close the door; then popped it back open again. "Oh, I have wonderful news from Avery Burgess. Get dressed so we can talk about it!"

She smiled and winked as the door closed.

Avery Burgess was alone in his office, the door closed, for nearly 30 minutes after Paul left. He was formulating in his mind a call he was preparing to make to Governor Burnside. His was a special, unique relationship with the British administrators. Basically, they left him alone but responded quickly if he called. The governor had told Avery, privately, shortly after arriving in the islands in 1988 "Whitehall believes you are their shining example of what a native here can do if he applies himself." The Commonwealth Foreign Office, known as Whitehall in the environs, held no illusions about the Turks and Caicos Islands. They viewed this colony not as

an asset but rather as a burden. Until very recently, Britain had provided an annual 'gift' of up to 10 million US dollars to the colony just to pay the bare bones cost of running government and maintaining British presence. Most former British colonies were now independent, and a productive part of the commonwealth. In 1988 the local revenues collected within the islands had finally passed the annual cost of local government. It was not the paltry 10 million dollars they contributed that bothered the British; it was the fact the islands were showing no sign of being able to manage their own affairs.

Britain's colonial days were over; even Hong Kong would soon be gone. Colonial department offices were now vacant at Whitehall; as senior members retired or died, they were not being replaced since the end of the colonial era was rushing towards them.

The British in 1978 attempted to plant a seed of independence in the islands. Quietly, they urged then emerging native leaders to consider 'how much better off you might be as an independent nation'. 1978 native leaders were young, impressionable, and not worldly. They saw themselves as Presidents or Chairmen or even Kings. And for several years these young leaders tried to sell the concept of independence to the population. It didn't go down well. The populace quickly saw through the glitter of being independent.

"We too small" said some.

"We not prepared" said others.

"We not smart enough" said those who were really the brightest.

And so the brief attention to independence had waned. Only bar-room politicians still practiced the independence line; and, the elected official

who occasionally wished to goad the collective British goat.

With the boom on Portobello, a new fear had risen in the British minds. "We worry" confided the Governor to Avery one day "how poorly the politicians treat your island. Last year 78% of all government revenues originated there. Yet in the budget this year only 24% comes back to your island. We have tried to point out the fallacy of this thinking."

Avery was pragmatic about it all. Yes, his island would do better, faster, with fully paved roads, a better functioning police, health and educational system. But Avery realized that of the 11 legislative seats in the country, Portobello only filled two. The other 9 seats were all on islands where people still lived, and voted; even if they had no jobs.

The governors's unvoiced fear that Portobello might take financial matters into its own hands was not an issue; at this time. But Avery knew it could be. And he had a plan should it become an issue.

On his yellow telephone he pushed memory dial position two. This was a private line to the Governor's desk.

"Yes" came the curt response.

"Avery Burgess here."

"Good day Avery; I hope this is a social call. The end of the year always makes me nervous."

"Not exactly a social call. I took a chance you would be in your office on this Saturday."

"Oh my; should we switch to secure?"

"I think so."

Both men found the appropriate button on their desks to activate a rudimentary voice scrambling system. Now evesdroppers, and there was ample

hints at what happens next. Good idea and no

opportunity for this in the island's telephone system, would hear only a high pitched whining noise on the line. Neither Burgess nor the Governor would notice much change although each voice was now approximately one half octave higher in pitch.

"Speak to me Mrs. Burgess" chided the Governor. He always said the same thing on this line after scrambling was activated and Avery no longer laughed at the lighthearted British humor.

"You will recall our conversation about ten days ago; concerning clipping the wings of a minister or two?"

"I do." Even with scrambling on, the Governor was cautious. He was certain that for every scrambling system there was a relatively simple fix. Afterall, at his official home in Waterloo he watched scrambled satellite TV with a descrambler which a local electronics chap had 'fixed' so he could do so without paying for HBO and the rest.

"I'd like to suggest a candidate; one I believe you will approve of."

"Go on."

"It seems we have evidence of direct involvement by Minister Lawrence Harvey in the game to approve those much desired work and residency permits. I have a recently arrived Canadian here who is preparing for you a detailed written report of how he got caught in Harvey's snare."

"I see."

"In this incident, Harvey saw to the approval of a permit so this man could go to work for him in his construction business here. Of course Harvey himself directly benefits from this approval."

"How believeable is your person?"

"Totally, and I have independent verification for most of what he says.

I'm not sure this is a big enough violation to hang Harvey from the yard arm, however."

The Governor laughed at this obvious reference to British penal history. He appreciated Avery's fine sense of British maritime law.

"Actually, your timing couldn't be more precise. Since we last talked on this matter I have received from the Attorney General's office several reports of, shall we say, suspected indescretions by Minister Harvey. With what you are telling me, we may have a barrage to fire rather than a single musket ball to the heart. None of the shots alone might be deadly but the sum of them all, well ..."

" I will have the written report later today. And it will come over to you personally with my son Alton on Monday morning."

"Is there any danger, to you, in this?" asked his excellency.

"Yes, some. The man writing the report is a cabinet maker from Toronto; here with his wife and 3 children. He has skills badly needed here-"

"And you wouldn't want to see him deported in all of this?"

"Precisely. I've suggested he may have to fly out on short notice and stay away for up to a week. I also told him when he is instructed to return a brand new work and residency permit will be waiting for him."

"That seems like a reasonable request of me. But the work permit will have to be issued to him alone, so there is no trail."

"I know that."

'Strange' pondered the governor, 'Avery always hangs onto the permits himself.' "Is there anything else?"

"One more. You are very well acquainted with the difficulties Pauline Conner has been facing finding a suitable broadcast person here."

"Oh my God, yes! I had another dose of senseless reporting this last week. I hope you have good news for me in this area."

"I think so. This cabinet maker's wife is a very accomplished, professional broadcast news person. I would like to see her get on the job for Pauline as quickly as possible."

"Two things. The last two people she hired were supposed to be professionals. Neither worked out. So when you use the same words to describe this lady, I am gun shy. Having said that, I suppose another new one can't cause any more problems with our island's news coverage than the present alcoholic. Does this lady drink?"

Avery laughed out loud. "I don't know, but when I checked on her through Toronto everything I heard was very positive."

"Then my last point. Pauline's work permit situation is this. She was given permission to import an ex-pat for this position. It never really detailed a specific person and as long as she is sending one out, the present one, and hiring a new one, I see no problems. But if she tried to keep them both on, that would be a problem. Of course this lady will have to take the medical exam and fill out the forms. But once she has done that, with Pauline's blanket permit this cabinet maker's wife can start work. Say, so I will know, what is her name?"

"Karen Monasto. The husband is Paul."

"Karen M-O-N-A-S-T-O? Is that it?"

"Yes, they are Italian in case you can't guess."

"Mr. Burgess, some things sir are self evident. I wonder if she knows an Italian recipe for lasagne. I haven't had good Italian lasagne since I was in Los Angeles."

"I'll find out for you, sir."

"Good show. Alright, is that it then?"

"That's it. Will you let me know before they begin draping a rope over the yard arm? I want Paul to be prepared."

"Of course; cheerio."

"Good day sir."

As both men hung up their instruments, each obeyed the blinking red light and switched off the voice scrambler box.

Avery swung in his chair and noted the time. 10:15AM. Opening his bottom right hand desk drawer with a small key from his heavily laden chain, he pulled out a sliding shelf. Three dozen solid state lights blinked back at him; twelve rows of 3 lights each. The green light in the 10th set told him the automatic tape recording system on the yellow phone line was armed and functional. A yellow light would mean the tape supply was nearly gone. A red light would be an alarm; a fault with the system. Bill Conner had designed and built this system. The wonder to Avery was that on this island where Murphy's Law prevailed, he had never seen a red light on any of the 12 indicators. He had worried about the system faulting, and more, when Bill left; 'Who will fix this when it breaks?' he had asked Conner. 'Not when, if' Conner had corrected.

Portobello's telephone system, operated by British firm Cable and Wireless, had grown more rapidly than almost any other part of the island's infrastructure. When Avery and Velma Burgess moved to Portobello in 1972, there was only one telephone on the island. It was a hand-crank unit straight out of World War Two, housed in a leaky wooden box mounted on a post at the base of Susie Turn. Ancient undersea cable, retired in the mid

50's in the British Virgin Islands, had been unwound across the shallow waters between South Caicos and Portobello to connect this rickety phone to the national office in Grand Turk. To use the phone a person had to lift the earpiece from the hook and crank vigorously on the handle. This cranking created a small electrical signal that somehow found its way through the water logged, damaged cable to eventually appear as a ringing noise on the Grand Turk manual operator's switchboard. If the ringing signal was heard, and if the operator on duty was not involved in other duties or talking to her mother or girlfriend on another line, the attention-requested ringing signal would be answered. Then the caller, ~~often~~ sometimes standing drenching wet in pouring rain, would try to pass on to the operator a message. Sometimes it worked; most of the time it did not.

Seven years later, when Bill Conner arrived on the island, Portobello had a small sub-exchange of its own and there were 50 telephones on the island. The undersea cable had been replaced with a newer cable, but often during storms and tidal action the new cable was unreliable. It was not unusual for Portobello to go days without outside telephone contact, even in 1979.

By 1980, Cable and Wireless was under considerable pressure to make the Portobello telephone system function better. So they sent to the island a full-time technician who would do his best to keep the old equipment working while new equipment was installed. His name was Larry Harvey.

Harvey had quickly learned that although Cable and Wireless paid him $550 a month to work for them, he could earn two or three times that amount each month by simply juggling the priority install list for new phones. The process was simple. He was given six new phones and six new numbers to activate each month. He and he alone determined which of the 60 to 90 people

on the waiting list would get a phone. Most people knew that if they offered Harvey a tip, say $200, they would get a phone sooner. A few knew that if they tipped him $500 they might expect a phone within 60 days. Harvey constantly tested the market to determine how much money a phone was really worth. A man named Bradley Yinger had established the all time record; $2,000 for a phone,'today'.

When Harvey was reassigned from Portobello to Grand Turk in 1984, he was very upset with the transfer. Phones had become more plentiful between 1980 and 1984, but the waiting list was growing in direct proportion. When he was transferred, under protest, there were 440 phones and a waiting list of more than 300. He left behind three assistants, each of whom he had carefully screened and taught privately the joys of operating their own phone company inside of the larger Cable and Wireless operation.

Two of these men had risen to senior technician status with the company by 1990, and one was now stationed fulltime on Portobello. The second was on Grand Turk. They continued to practice Harvey's 'company within a company' business technique, but now on a much more sophisticated scale. And they had a silent supervisor in their private business; their old boss, who maintained the relationship even after entering politics and quitting Cable and Wireless.

Samuel Stubbs had been in the Portobello exchange all morning. This was his day off but he knew the racks of equipment would not be attended on Saturday. He spent the morning rigging telephone tapping devices on three lines he had flagged with yellow tags. One of these lines belonged to Avery Burgess. Another, a leased line full time circuit between attorney Charles Scott's office and the studios of WIV-FM. The third tag marked an office

line going into the manager's office at Larry Harvey's Portobello construction business.

After tapping into each line, Stubbs ran cables down the equipment racks, inside of plastic ducts to hide the wires, to a bundle of outgoing telephone circuits. Nine other previously tapped lines also came to this same point. When he was finished, there would be twelve telephone numbers at the exchange which could be monitored at will several miles away. All 12 of the circuits ran from the exchange to the apartment of Larry Harvey's girlfriend on Portobello. When Stubbs finished at the exchange, he would spend the afternoon connecting these re-routed lines to monitoring units and tape recorders in the apartment.

Stubbs and co-worker Marvin Cox now earned an average of $1,800 extra each month by selling information to greedy business people. They obtained this information by tapping lines, recording conversations, and passing the information gleaned on to willing customers through an intermediary. No-one buying information suspected it originated from tapped telephone lines; one customer was a source in July and then became a customer in August, never guessing the intermediary was playing both ends against one another.

Lawrence Harvey considered this his most successful business. He had learned the technology while attending a conference in Chicago at government expense. At the Conrad Hilton Hotel there had been an independent telephone network hardware trade show occuring at the same time as his official meeting. Intrigued by the equipment displays, he talked his way onto the exhibit floor because of his own telephone background. When he left the display floor five hours later, his arms loaded down with shopping bags filled with product literature, a germ of an idea was buzzing in his head.

For less than $4,000 in hardware, Harvey then set up a business producing more than $9,000 in cash income the first month. And it had grown steadily since that time, just one year ago.

He had one more partner; a real estate sales person whom everyone on the island knew was an amazing gossip. "How does Luscious know that?" people marveled. Luscious Lane had been a journalist, a private investigator, and sometimes real estate sales person. She was the perfect partner for Harvey because people were already accustomed to asking her for information or help. He merely increased her information gathering ability with his technology.

Using a headset, Stubbs was amusing himself and checking his wiring as he added the three new lines to their private network. He was just clipping his headset across the Avery Burgess line as he heard a voice answer "Yes" on an outgoing call. He immediately recognized it to be the Governor; and the caller was Burgess himself. Naturally he stayed on the circuit to see what he might learn. When the voices disappeared and the high pitched whine of a scrambler substituted, Stubbs lost interest. At the apartment was a descrambler 'master', capable of being dialed to virtually any code in use. But no equipment was ever kept at the exchange by he and his partners since the essence of the operation was to do all of the intelligence gathering in a safe location. No matter; by 5 PM that night, any calls on this Burgess line would be monitored and if necessary descrambled. This call got away; the next one would not.

The leased line connecting attorney Scott's office to WIV-FM radio studios was a mystery. He had installed it himself several years before; 1987 he recalled. He never did understand why this attorney would want to

have a full-time open circuit to the radio station. It had been his duty to make the line good; Bill Conner had connected the equipment at both ends. Stubbs did know that Scott had been Conner's attorney; that was common knowledge. Now somebody out there was also wondering about something in Scott's office, or at WIV-FM. But why this line? Scott's office had six other regular telephone lines; the radio station two. If somebody wanted to monitor the business activities of either location, they would do it on the regular lines; wouldn't they?

Stubbs clipped his earphones across the circuit. There was no sound. He left them on while completing the connections. In 15 minutes time, he heard absolutely nothing. Perhaps the circuit was no longer in use; maybe it was just forgotten about? He thought to himself "Conner has been gone, let's see - two years is it, now?" He unclipped the phones and went to the third; the business line into Harvey's construction shop. "The boss want to get something on the manager" he thought to himself. And he went to work to finish the job.

Chapter 13

His Excellency, British Governor Martin Bunrside, had reluctantly agreed to chair a meeting at 2PM in his office. The Governor arrived to the islands in 1988 after serving most recently as Attorney General in the British Virgin Islands. In his early 60's, he was now finishing an acceptable but hardly meritorious career in the overseas arm of British Civil Service.

Appointment as Governor here was the last leg of the trip and Burnside wanted very much to get through to retirement without any major upheavels. He often told his wife Mindy, "If we can simply keep the lid on and avoid any rioting and civil unrest, this will count as a successful tour."

Burnside, then, was a man who believed in compromise; negotiated settlements. He left righteous indignation to those civil servants still in their 30s and 40s.

Burnside had replaced a man in his 40s. Governor Terry Clapton had burned with righteous indignation. During Clapton's rein, the native elected Chief Minister of the islands was packed off to an American jail following a U.S. DEA conspired sting operation. Chief Minister Nat Simpson had been caught pink-palmed accepting $25,000 from a DEA undercover agent. The money was to encourage Simpson to look the other way while a shipment of cocaine moved through his home island of South Caicos. The former Chief Minister not only held national political power, he also owned and operated the only fueling service at the South Caicos airport. Clapton tried to shift the blame for loss of the national leader to the Americans, who made the actual bust, but local politicians had worked the population into a frenzy when it became clear the British Governor and government had assisted the Americans in the sting. In a most unusual move, Clapton finished out his term in the

islands with two British special agents from London acting as bodyguards. On the day he and his family left the islands, the local newspaper publisher had incited a group of 50 natives to scream their disapproval at him as he headed for the Pan Am flight. Photographs of the former Governor running for the safety of the airplane appeared in newspapers all over the world. Videotape clips appeared on CNN and NBC that evening.

Burnside recalled all of this vividly; he was not going to create a similar scenario for himself. Clapton had 20 years to recover his lost civil service status; Burnside had no such luxury.

Today's meeting carried the elements of the Nat Simpson fiasco. A member of government was apparently engaged in illegal activities. Each of the ministers stepped over their legal limits almost weekly. Burnside gently reminded each of their legal rights and responsibilities at the regular Executive Council meetings. Occasionally, he had to take them aside individually and coerce them back to the straight and narrow. That came with the job.

But today's issue was far beyond that. Unfortunately, two basic and important laws in the country appeared to have been broken. And to make matters worse, the leading British firm in the islands, Cable and Wireless, was directly insulted by what was happening. Burnside knew that if he did not take decisive action, promptly, Cable and Wireless would have a top level executive sitting in front of a superior at Whitehall Monday morning. The effect could be the same as rioting in his streets; his own job rating would plummet and this could lead to a less than satisfactory retirement package.

"Your excellency, Attorney General McTabbish and Chief Secretary Thatcher

are here". The telephone intercom interrupted his thoughts.

"Yes. Ask them to join me, please."

Jeremy McTabbish, a 41 year old Irish lawyer, had been in the islands two years. McTabbish was a less than successful civil barrister at home in Ireland. Nobody knew for sure why he gave up private practice and joined the civil service in the middle of what should have been his most productive years. Some said his change in venue was caused by a wife who seemed to have difficulty staying home; or home alone, when he was at work. McTabbish was a normally gentle man given to long walks by himself carrying an open book from which he read aloud Socrates or Plato.

Livingston Thatcher, Chief Secretary, had spent most of his working years attached to various British consulates and the occasional embassy as a trade representative. He dealt with local businessmen at each post trying to increase British exports to the country in question. Thatcher's job in the Turks and Caicos was to oversee the growing army of civil servants. He was also the day to day contact man for the Crown with each of the elected members of the legislature and of course the ministers of portfolio. All of this was quite a move upward for the man. At 45 he had never married. Since arriving on Grand turk, he did have a steady string of male visitors from all over the world; people he had met in such places as Chicago and Bombay while on assignment.

Burnside rose from behind his worn maple desk to greet his two closest confidants. The trio represented The Queen in this God forsaken outpost and when there was trouble, they stood as a triumverate protecting each other's backside.

"Jeremy, Livingston" he said to each shaking their hands. Unconciously he

reached to his back pocket for a hankerchief to wipe off his right hand after shaking with Livingston. As he had explained to Mindy once, "One can never be sure what that hand touched just before touching you."

"Let me hear the update before the chaps from C and W arrive." A 30 minute lead had been planned for his briefing.

Attorney General McTabbish sat down next to Thatcher on a couch adjacent to the desk and opened a file folder.

"Here are the basic elements.

"On December 3rd, a visiting C and W field engineer found three telephone lines tapped at the central exchange here. He reported this to Robin Lewster at the telephone headquarters. Lewster, who is not technical, went back to the exchange with the visiting engineer, a chap named Brown, and he viewed the illegal taps.

"On December 4th, the engineer flew out to his next stop leaving Lewster to deal with it. Brown could only determine that the lines had been tapped; he had inadequate time to tell where the taps were redirected.

"On December 12th, Lewster asked for help from the UK. It seems the only engineers he has on staff here presently are native and he had surmised the work had been done by a native worker. He apparently had no-one here he felt he could trust. He also advised my office of the discovery that same day. I am afraid we gave it no priority at the time."

Burnside interrupted. "How long before we responded?"

"More than a week-"

"Will that delay cause us any problems?"

"I think not, because what Lewster did next was assinine."

"That was-"

"For reasons he cannot adequately explain, he called the Chief Minister to warn him that his telephone lines could be tapped. Now at this point Lewster knew only that he had three tapped lines. He was not certain who's lines were tapped, he certainly had no idea why they had been tapped."

"And this of course leads us to the now famous outburst in Executive Council where CM Smythe accused us of tailing him with undercover agents and tapping his phones."

"Precisely. And then a week later the careful leak from Smythe to Benjamin Dornfield so he could engage in a little British bashing in his filthy newspaper."

Thatcher butted in. "And the equally infamous radio newscast on WIV by that wino station manager."

McTabbish continued, thumbing ~~threw~~ through a thick sheath of papers.

"Quite. Now, the UK headquarters for C and W then redirected the engineer, Brown, back ~~through~~ here on his return to London. He arrived on the 20th, I think. Yes, the 20th. Brown spent all of that night in the exchange tracing wires, or whatever it is that engineers do. He wrote a report to Lewster and climbed on the airplane to return to London on the 21st; something about getting home for the holidays."

"You have a copy of the report, there?"

"Yes, but let me paraphrase it for you in spoken English since it was written by a bloody engineer. It took me two days of intensive work, with Lewster by my side helping as best he could, to get to the bottom line.

"Yes?"

"It says there are 19 taps in all, including your own private hot line phone. When I learned that, of course I immediately warned you about always

being careful on that line."

Burnside fidgeted nervously in his chair and crossed his legs. His arms he drew up tight in front of himself and also crossed.

"I think about it each time it rings. I find myself being very brief and using the scrambler whenever possible, as I talk on it," pointing to his red telephone. "And I have never trusted the integrity of the scrambling. Please go on."

McTabbish was relishing his role. Private law practice had never been this much fun and now he was right in the middle of genuine political intrigue. He hadn't slept soundly for more than a week, fantasizing about this incident.

"Well, the 19 tapped lines run the gamut from a lady who is secretary to Minister Larry Harvey at her home to your hot line. Most are lines of businesses or business people. Both banks are heavily tapped and both bank managers are tapped at their homes. Strangely, there are no taps on any phones connected to the Chief Minister. None at all."

"And that was a reason you suspected he might be behind this, originally?"

"That and his outburst at Council, until we later understood Lewster had called the CM to warn him."

"But now you know differently?"

"No, we think or suspect differently but we are still not certain who is really benifitting from this scheme. With the exception of course of Minister Harvey."

"Go on," prodded the Governor, glancing at his watch. It was 2:15 and the Cable and Wireless people would be in his outer office in another 15 minutes.

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"And that was a reason you suspected he might be behind this, originally?"

"That and his outburst at Council, until we later understood Lewster had called the CM to warn him. That of course set him off."

"But now you know differently?"

"No, we think or suspect differently but we are still not certain who is really benifitting from this scheme. We do have one important piece of evidence on which we are basing our present assumption that Minister Harvey is involved."

"And that evidence?"

"Customs records. A sizeable dollar amount of telephone industry hardware

has been steadily coming into the country for a year now; it is always shipped to Harvey's construction business on Portobello. It came to our attention when Thatcher here was doing his annual audit of customs records for end of year. As you know, Cable and Wireless receives all of their equipment duty free. He thought it strange to see tens of thousands of dollars of telephone equipment coming in with duty paid. That triggered our possible connection to Harvey. But I emphasize it is only circumstantial at this point."

"Go on" prodded the Gevernor, glancing at his watch. It was 2:15 and the Cable and Wireless people would be in his outer office in another 15 minutes.

McTabbish also glanced at his watch.

"The report says all 19 tapped lines are redirected through what they call trunk lines to a single residence. The residence is owned by a cousin of Minister Harvey; a lady we all know as 'Plentiful'. As you are aware, Plentiful has a reputation of being the most knowledgeable gossip on this island."

"A well earned reputation, I might add" injected Thatcher.

"The next problem was determining what is being done with these lines inside of Plentiful's house. This has been a tough problem since we don't believe we can trust anyone in the police department to do any sleuthing for us."

"Which explains why Jeremy and I have been taking our evening and early morning walks in that otherwise disrespectful part of town" added Thatcher.

The Governor unfolded his arms and leaned forward to his desk.

"Quite. You are both now candidates for MI 5 as I understand it. What

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"Quite. You are both now candidates for MI 5 as I understand it. What do we know about the inside of Plentiful's house?"

McTabbish turned a page to several handwritten sheets on yellow legal pad.

"We know there is a room on the southwest corner filled with several dozen state of the art tape recorders, several FAX machines, a teleprinter and an equipment rack ~~filled~~ with other electronics. We know the room is lit up all night and there seems to be somebody in that room at all times. We have a partial list of people who come and go from the residence and prominent amongst those is C and W chief tech Marvin Cox."

"And Harvey?"

"He has never been observed going there. That's the bad news. I believe

the Cable and Wireless chaps have something that will tie Harvey more closely to the operation, however."

"What is that?"

"They call it an exchange synthesizer, whatever that might be. I understand they are bringing this synthesizer gadget with them when they come."

"Good. Now, what has been done about the people who's phones are tapped?"

"The taps are still in place. I did meet privately with Anthony Belston at Scotia and Chad Johnson at Barclays to warn them. Both were most upset and neither could understand why we couldn't disconnect the taps right now. I suspect we may hear directly from Barclays London, or from the home office, anytime on this. I tried to explain the extremely sensitive nature of the investigation and our need to catch those responsible so they cannot wiggle out of the charges. Both are cooperating, but not happy."

"And the others tapped?"

"As you know, the list includes many prominent business people. That is what concerned us; the list is long and each person has his or her own personality. Many are unpredictable under stress and I determined that if we told one, we were obligated to tell them all. Just one of these people mouthing off at a cocktail party and we could lose everything. If those taps disappear before we are ready, we'll have nothing but these pieces of paper to take to court", lifting his file folder above his lap.

"I see." The Governor leaned back in his chair and motioned to see the AG's file folder. Thatcher lept to his feet, took the folder from Jeremy's hand and ~~took~~ CARRIED it to the Governor. Thatcher reopened the file to the list of 19 taps. Burnside studied the list for several minutes, saying nothing.

'I know everyone on this list' he thought to himself. 'Some are very close friends' and he ran his finger down the names. 'Laing, Buttonwood, Cooper, Jackson... . Who knows what damage is being done right now by these snoops?' And he would have to face these people when it was all over and try to explain to them why they were not told, or why the taps had been left in place for weeks after being discovered.

"This whole episode has dragged on for too long. Each day we delay closing on this more and more damage is being done. Jeremy, how fast can we wrap this up?"

"I hope within a week, but that depends upon Cable and Wireless since we are counting on them for the technical expertise needed to nail this down. We'll need to put pressure on them in a few minutes.

"Let me digress. I have reviewed the relevent statutes. The list of laws being broken is quite long; it is there on the last page in the folder.

"First of all, there is the Privacy Act. Unfortunately it was last redrafted in 1938 and the technology of that time was primitive. So the actual act of tapping a telephone is not addressed. Still, I think it will hold up in court.

"Second, there is the Confidentiality Act. This is new enough to catch them properly. Anyone who overhears a private conversation and passes the conversation or essence of that conversation on to a third party is in violation. Incidently, this ~~is~~ was the first line I heard from the bank people; 'what about the Confidentiality Act?'."

"We all suspect many of their clients are sending money here which is not clean; (but that's a matter for another day) The more they protest, the more I believe this is the case. Go on" motioned the Governor.

"Under those two are six separate laws relating to breaking and entering, using another's property for personal gain, selling a commodity you are not entitled to-"

"Stop. Do you feel this information is being sold to others?"

"Well, yes I do. I have no evidence of this but let's consider the possibilities. If Harvey is behind this as we suspect, he would view everything they hear as a commodity; information for sale. I believe Plentiful is the agent for this information but unfortunately I need to be able to have a trustworthy investigator to prove that."

"You mean a non-native detective?"

"Exactly. I've talked with London about getting such a person here and they are not encouraging, before mid-January. I thought perhaps if you requested it-"

"Yes, quite. Let me see what I can do. But before I do this, are you ~~quite~~ certain there is no-one in the police department we could trust to shadow Plentiful?"

"Not when you look at the family trees. Of the four detectives, three are related to Harvey. The one who is not, plus one who is, have been Plentiful's lovers from time to time."

"The same thing could be said about half of the men on this island," snickered Thatcher.

"Yes, I see the problem. Is there more or should we ask if the Cable and Wireless chaps are here?"

"One more thing," said Jeremy, rising to speak from a standing position.

"Our Cable and Wireless head man, Robin Lewster, is not up to what is happening. He will prattle on about the integrity of their system and his

concerns that if this becomes public there will be a clamour for his head. He doesn't seem able to focus on anything beyond C and W's image. You may have to make him understand that their image is secondary to the prosecution of the guilty parties here."

Right after British bashing in the newspaper, publisher Benjamin Dornfield liked Cable and Wireless bashing next best. Virtually every issue carried an inflammatory story detailing some native's agrievement with the telephone company. Much of this bashing was justified in the Governor's eyes; and he disliked having to defend Cable and Wireless in Executive Council simply because he was British and they were a British company. Dornfield's Cable and Wireless bashing lept into high gear after the local magistrate's court found him guilty of failing to pay nearly $2,500 in telephone charges. That was two years ago, and Dornfield still did not have a proper telephone because he owed them money. Naturally he was incensed since operating a newspaper was especially difficult without a phone.

"Are the Cable and Wireless people there?" asked Burnside on his intercom. There was no response, so he repeated the message. Still no response.

Thatcher rose and walked for the door. "Your telephone-company intercom picked a dandy time to quit!" All three men were still laughing as Thatcher reappeared with a trio of telephone people in tow.

With manager Robin Lewster was UK engineer John Brown and a man they introduced as Reggie Seybold. The latter would be presented as a company technician who had flown in on Friday with Brown from London.

Following introductions and seating, Governor Burnside reminded each of the extremely sensitive nature of the investigation underway. He mentioned

the tapping of bank lines, the lack of privacy now afforded to the bank's confidential dealings, and the uncertainty the tapping placed over virtually every business and government activity in the country. Then he turned squarely to Lewster and dropped his bottom line.

"Your own internal security has failed. I believe that each and every customer you have could hold you legally responsible for a violation of their privacy. I believe the banks could hold you legally responsible for their present lack of confidentiality. Mr. McTabbish, Mr. Livingston and I are here only to see that those who perpetrated this act are apprehended and prosecuted to the full limits of the law. If, however, we fail in this mission because of some roadblock you place before us, whether deliberate or otherwise, we will have no choice but to bring suit against Cable and Wireless for allowing this to happen. I'm certain the banks, and many others, will join us in such a suit. Do I make myself clear?"

There was stunned silence in the Governor's office. No-one, not even McTabbish, had expected the Governor to take such a tough stance.

Lewster planned to go on the offensive when he walked in. Out of courtesy to the Governor, he allowed his excellency to speak first. Now everything he planned to say was dashed. He intended to blame the Attorney General's office for his not immediately disconnecting the taps when first found, even if he had delayed 8 days in telling the AG about the taps. He also had wanted to say he went to the Chief Minister because he found the AG difficult to work with. Now he would say none of this.

"I believe" he began "we can move this along rapidly now. Mr. Brown and Mr. Seybold will stay here and work under my direction until this matter is cleared to everyone's satisfaction. And as for a breach of our security,

well, if we find this tapping was politically motivated, I doubt the Governor would want a repeat of the Nat Simpson fiasco."

Burnside was boiling inside. He was being threatened with a Political Explosion by a second-rate telephone bureaucrat. ~~with a political explosion~~. He remembered his temper and looked away to stare at a portrait of his wife on the corner of the desk. To himself he counted; '1,2,retirement, 3,4,retirement, 5,6-'.

"Alright Mr. Lewster, tell me what you intend to do."

"Right. The problem, we see, is finding the perpetrators. And determining without a doubt who is involved. Mr. Brown and Mr. Seybold have brought a telephone device with them that will allow this to happen, with security."

"Please continue," asked the Governor. Reggie Seybold unpacked a small container about the size of a shoebox. He took the electronic device from inside and handed it to Lewster.

Lewster held it out in front of himself as if it might be a holy grail.

"This is a telephone exchange synthesizer. With it, we can attach ourselves by remote control into any line on the exchange. Unlike the primitive tapping we are tracing, this device connects only to the exchange through its own wire pair."

"Yes; wire pair?"

"That means this device is connected by a pair of wires like any ordinary telephone. Now, let us take our instant example. We know there are 19 telephone lines currently being relayed to the home of Miss Plentiful." Neither Thatcher nor McTabbish could resist smiling at 'Miss' Plentiful.

"What we don't know is who is ~~getting~~ having the information intercepted. I believe the AG has learned Miss Plentiful's home is filled with tape recorders and other equipment. That suggests the information is being

stored, probably on cassette recorders that start recording when they hear a spoken word. We also know Miss Plentiful's home has two normal telephone lines. Our first thought was that if we monitored these regular lines we might intercept outward going messages from Miss Plentiful or whomever is operating the recorders and by tracing where these calls were going, ~~compare~~ S the text of the calls and the recipient to see if there is incrimination."

"In other words we tap the tappers?" asked Burnside.

"That is an option; but my legal department in London says we would need a court order here to do that and once we involved the court system we might well give away our investigation."

Governor Burnside turned to the Attorney General.

"Jeremy?"

"Yes, well, I think that could be correct. The judge may be discrete, but there are court recorders, secretaries and the lot. It would be difficult to conceal the order totally."

"If we merely asked Brown and Seybold here to cleverly tap the lines in question without a court order, we violate the law and we run the risk that whomever is inside doing this work in our exchange would discover ~~their~~ OUR work. We think we could fool the blighters, but we can't be sure."

"I think that option is an unacceptable risk," suggested the AG.

"I see; so go on about this miracle box."

"Well, our London attorneys feel that your 1938 law here on privacy only covers the actual physical act of tapping. So here is what this synthesizer will do.

"It has the special ability to listen in, tap if you will, on any number served by the exchange. It does this by merely being connected to the

exchange as a normal telephone might be. That means we could place this device, say here in your office, and then by remote control tell the box to listen to any specific number we dialed in. I'd like to demonstrate if I might; yes?"

"Yes of course; I hope we are not going to listen in on something that might be embarassing to us!"

"May we disconnect your hot line phone to use that number briefly; this will take less than a minute?"

"Of course; I use it only sparingly at the moment, given the circumstances."

Seybold arose from his chair, reclaimed the synthesizer from Lewster and popped the phone jack plug from the red phone. The plug was reinserted into the synthesizer.

"Mr. Brown, would you operate it for us?" asked Lewster. The engineer moved to the desk and pushed a button. Various lights came on.

"Your excellency, give us a local phone number; any number you wish."

"2777"; his private house phone. Brown punched in 2777 and there was the instant sound of a dial tone from a recessed speaker.

"That tells us this phone is not in use at the moment. Try again."

"Let's make this a real test; does anyone know the number of Plentiful?"

The AG went to his notes. "2242 is one" he began. Brown had it punched in before he could recite the second.

"-she say she had baby by Alton Burgess; she want money."

Nobody in the governor's office dared breathe. A second voice modulated the speaker.

"How much money?"

"She say Burgess have lots. She want ten thousand dollars now, same every year til boy child be 21."

"Harvey know this?"

"I no tell him yet. I tell you first cause you know Burgess. You want hear tape? I play for you."

"No, later. I call Harvey and-"

The Governor knew a crime when he heard it. Law or not, his office might be engaging in a crime by listening. He reached across the desk and pushed the button Brown had used to start the machine. The sound died on the word 'and-'.

"Any number at all, just by dialing it in?" he asked.

Lewster knew he had their full attention.

"Any number on this exchange; not Portobello or South Caicos. We'd have to take it to the area served by those exchanges. If you hadn't been in such a hurry to turn it off, I would have asked the synthesizer to also display the number Plentiful had dialed as well. It lets us listen, descretely, and it will log and display the calling number plus the number called."

"OK, I am convinced. How much does a machine like this cost?"

Lester deferred to Brown.

"Twenty thousand, I guess-".

"Dollars?"

"Pounds".

"Mr. McTabbish, we have just seen the next generation wire tapping machine. I want our privacy laws updated, now!" The AG nodded silent agreement.

"Mr. Lewster, this machine is dangerous. I cannot condone its use unless

it is operated by either myself or the AG. Are you prepared to leave it with us after suitable instruction?"

Lewster came down from his cloud. "With you, sir? In all respect, it is as you say a dangerous machine. I doubt London-"

"If you mean 'your London', that is one thing. If you mean 'my London', well - I will have my London get the agreement of your London within 24 hours."

Lewster knew he meant it. He also knew he was about to lose control of the investigation. What, for example, would he have Brown and Seybold do while the Governor or AG 'played' with the synthesizer?

"Yes, well, quite. If that is the way it is-".

"That is the way it is" assured Burnside.

"Then what would you suggest I have Mr. Brown and Mr. Seybold do while this is being used. They were sent here to assist-".

"Portobello" said the Governor. "I would like the Portobello exchange checked for taps, just as you did so well here. And I would like a full report on this desk by 9AM Monday."

"I suppose-"

"And Mr. Brown, if you and Mr. Seybold find even one tap in Portobello, I want a call at my home advising me. Just call 2777 and when I answer say 'Yes'. Nothing more, nothing less. If I don't hear from you, I will assume there are no taps there. Is that clear?"

Brown turned to Lewster. He was shaking his head, half way between yes and no. The no part was disbelief; the yes to the Governor's instructions.

"Yes, that is clear," Brown replied.

"Good; if you three gentlemen will excuse me with the AG and Chief

Secretary for five minutes, I will ask you to come back to instruct on this machine."

"Yes, your excellency," said Lewster with more than a hint of displeasure. The trio turned and walked from the office.

Burnside began pacing his floor. He never did this; both McTabbish and Thatcher knew their man was close to the edge.

"Gentlemen, I am frightened to death. Jeremy, I need your assurance that if you or I use this machine, singly or alone, we are not opening up ourselves and her majesty's government for lawsuits. Are we?"

"It is my opinion that if we both use it together and we carefully document everytime we listen in, we are performing a search operation. You have the authority as head of the island police force to issue your own orders of search; especially when you have good cause. I think we have excellent cause, national security and all of that, sir. I, as head legal officer here have the authority to issue orders to collect evidence. Ultimately, this will mean one or both of us will have to appear on the witness stand against, shall we say, Harvey if we bring him to trial."

"I realize that, Jeremy. But we can't have it both ways; we can't be legal and appoint someone else to do this. Perhaps it won't come to a court trial; let's not forget our goal here."

"Let me re-state that goal, sir, in view of the amazing demonstration. First, we have an illegal act being perpetrated and there is reason to believe our nation's privacy and respect for confidentiality is being violated. We must stop this. Second, we have one or more erring ministers who must be made to realize they do not have a license to do as they damn well please. Third and last, if we act swiftly, we may keep this from

damaging our time in history in these islands."

"I correct myself; our goals; a plural of goal. I would rearrange the sequence a bit, placing teaching our ministers a lesson as first. But that is just between us, here, now."

"Sir?" It was Thatcher who had no direct involvement in the pending operation, although he would ultimately have to deal with Harvey and others as if everything was normal, while the noose was tightening.

"Yes?"

"I worry about how widespread this may be. Nineteen is a lot of tapped telephone lines; this seems like a wholesale attack on our internal integrity to me."

"And?"

"Well, I support your sending those two off to Portobello. Now suppose they find more taps there. At what point do we admit this is too big for us, that we may need outside help?"

Burnside had to admit to himself he had not considered how they would cope with a whole~~s~~sale attack on the integrity of the nation. At what point would he ask for home office help? Would he at all, and risk being branded as an alarmist? Which would be worse for his retirment; being a foolish alarmist, or being run down by a pack of mad dog natives in the street if it turned against ~~them?~~ him? Here were three British officers of The Crown. They, on the other hand, were...at least in the thousands.

"I see your point. Alright, Livingston, I wish you to find a quiet spot and prepare me an options paper. Consider everything we know and tell me what options we have here. Leave nothing out; and type it yourself!"

"Yes sir, no overtime secretarial pool."

"Mr. McTabbish, I think you and I are now ready for a lesson on the - what do they call it? - oh yes, the exchange synthesizer. Mr. Thatcher, if you would invite our guests back in, and excuse yourself, it would be appreciated."

-end 13-

Chapter Fourteen

"Paul, are you finished yet? Can I read it?"

"Almost Hon; five more minutes. Say, I left my watch - what time is it getting to be?"

"Ahhh, just a sec. 3:15; OK?"

"OK."

Paul was finished, and he had been for at least 15 minutes. He was sitting, staring at the ocean water, after completing the hand written report which he had addressed to Governor Martin Burnside.

His problem was Karen. Up to this point, he had not told her about Avery's request, no - demand, that she go to work for Mrs. Conner. "How do I break this to her?" he wondered. When he explained his meeting with Avery, she was still groggy from her trauma attack. So he excused himself from including that SEGMENT, because of her condition. Then he found himself shut away in the children's bedroom writing and rewriting and then finally rewriting a third time the statement. It had been easier to put it off ~~then~~ than face her, but time was running out.

Standing up, he stretched his lean frame and picked the note pad and pen off the bedspread. "Here goes," he said quietly, taking steps towards the door. Opening the door he was startled to find Karen camped right there.

"Ready?" she asked.

"Yeh, sure. Mind if I get me a Scotch while you read it?"

"Do you think you should if you are going back to see Avery at 5?"

"Oh yeh, well, maybe just a light one; OK?"

"You're the one that has to face him, not me."

"I've been thinking about that."

"About what."

"About going alone; maybe you could come with me?"

"I thought you really liked the man, and you felt good talking with him."

"I do; but, ahh, I think there's something he needs to discuss with you also."

"Paul, get your Scotch and then come sit by me."

Paul looked away from her face knowing she was staring at him and walked into the kitchen. Karen now knew what she had suspected was true; there was something more Avery had said to Paul; something important and he hadn't told her. She walked to the couch and sat down, pulling her legs up underneath her body. She began reading his statement.

He was taking his time locating the glass, the ice cubes and finally the Scotch; Karen was finished with the first page and half way through the second when he finally joined her.

"OK so far?"

Karen knew Paul had to do this statement by himself. She had so wanted to ask him to tell her what to say and she would put his statement into better English. This was going to the Governor, and even if they never met the man, she wanted it to read properly. So she was plesantly surprised to find only one mis-spelled word on the first page. His style was erratic because he wrote as he talked; nothing she could do about that.

"Yeh, it's fine. I know you wrote it!"

"That bad, huh. Damn, this is the third time I did it; I really screwed up the first two."

"Paul, it really is OK; there is almost nothing I would correct, so far."

"Finish it and we'll talk...about it and something else."

Paul nervously stood hovering behind the couch and this made Karen nervous to have him reading over her shoulder. She bit her lip, finished the second page and turned to the last. It was only a third of a page in length. As she finished she raised her hand over her head and Paul reached for it with his own.

"OK, to sit down now?" he asked.

"Of course, silly; come sit down beside me, or at my feet on the floor if you wish."

Paul moved around the couch and sat at her feet with his back to the couch.

"Turn around please, so we can talk." She wanted to see his face as it often told her more than his words.

"Now, that's better. The statement has two mis-spelled words. You can correct both without doing it over. And it is complete, and it reads like you talk. That's OK; you are not a professional writer. It's better this way; it is believeable. If I jazzed it up, it might get a better grade in English 1A but it would be less believeable. That's something I learned when I worked for the CBC; go with the real thing, don't mess with reality."

Paul smiled up at her. "That's the other thing I wanted to talk with you about."

"Messing with reality?"

"No, the CBC."

"I see" she said slowly; "the C B C."

"Yeh. Remember when you said we'd both work together on our cabinet business here and I agreed?"

"That is the deal."

"Well, Avery Burgess kind of changed my thinking on that. He says ...he says Mrs. Conner would like you to run her radio stations."

"You have got to be kidding; this is a joke, right? Me run the radio stations for Pauline Conner? Tell me you made this up, or Avery wanted to make me laugh!"

"It's not a joke. He is dead serious. Look, Mrs. Conner has had terrible luck with those stations. You know how millions of people used to tune in to your 12 noon news from Toronto? Well, I guess her radio stations, being the only stations, have the same effect on people here. And she's had bad people doing the news and running the stations. Anyhow, Avery practically demanded that if I take the position with him that you take a position with Mrs. Conner. Damn. What do we do now?"

"Let me get this straight. Avery told you this is a two person package; if you go to work for him, I go to work for Mrs. Conner. If I won't do this, your deal is off?"

"He never said that. I suppose he could say that. He just told me you must go to work for Mrs. Conner and he knew, he just knew you would agree to do it. Do you know, can you imagine how hard it is to say 'no' to that man?"

"So this has been worrying you ever since you got back. And you didn't know how to tell me this; right?"

"No, I didn't want to mention it at first because you were weak, then I was in there writing. This is the first time we've had a chance to talk about it; really;"

"Really?"

He laughed. ~~She~~ He always knew when she had him in a corner and although she

usually won these discussions, he enjoyed being kicked around a little in the process. Karen could beat you up and you loved every blow.

"Well, almost really. I guess I did put off telling you about this."

Karen now laughed herself and leaned forward to kiss him on his balding forehead. Paul just smiled. ~~to himself~~. "She always makes it so easy, and I always worry so much. Someday I'll learn not to worry and just spit out these things," he thought to himself.

"Then let's talk about it. Me first because I have most of the questions. Positive; we could use the extra money, sure. But not if we spend it all on taking care of the kids in my absence. That has to be worked out.
Now the negatives since I can't think of any more positives right now. First, to do news you have to understand the market, the people, the history. I don't know beans about this place. I can barely spell Turks and Caicos and I know almost nobody. I could learn fast but Mrs. Conner might not want to wait. Next, I haven't done this in more than ten years; nearly 12 now that I remember how old Tony is. I might not still be able to do it. I had a youthful fire burning in me in Canada and I quit at the top of my peers. I'll level with you; it frightens me to death. Third, I'm used to having a big support staff and being able to mix with others of my field. I don't pretend to know much about this place, but I have the feeling it would be me alone; all alone. I'm not sure I could function without some sounding boards. Are you with me so far?"

Paul was entranced. He was trying to remember when Karen had this much fire in her eyes; it was when she was at CBC.

"OK so far. Please continue," and he pinched her leg to let her know he was right there.

"Let me see, where was I. See what happens? I've already lost my train of thought. OK, work permit. Look what just happened to you over a work permit. You got yours through political connections and now Avery says you will probably have to run and hide for up to a week before you can come back. I'm ~~know~~ sure you don't know, right, about a work permit for me?"

"Nope. But I figure if Avery is so sure you will go to work for Mrs. Conner, he has that all figured out. That's one of the reasons why I suggested you go back with me at 5 so you can ask him that."

"Paul, let me change the subject just a little. Let me play the Devil's Advocate. Ready?"

He nodded.

"We come here on vacation and we fall in love with the place. It's easy to do because we are tourists and the only people we talk to treat us like tourists. And we are vulnerable; our lives at home have gone down the crapper and we don't even realize what easy targets we are. The water's crystal clear, the people are friendly, the weather is nice, the beaches are white. The signs and the books say this is paradise. And we fall for it hook, line and so on.

"So we run back home, sell everything we own ... which isn't much ...tell our parents we are going off to this funny island, say goodbye to our friends and bingo, here we are.

"Oh yeh, we drag three sweet innocent kids into our craziness. They are uprooted from family, friends and school and dropped down on a white beach surrounded by black people they have been taught since early childhood to be afraid or suspicious of. Don't deny it. We didn't do a real good job preparing our kids for living in a multi-racial society.

but a forced history, repeat of repeating a thoughts? Paul's plans

"Then we get here and you find out the work you had arranged is upside down; right in the middle of some political turmoil we don't understand, and nobody wants to explain to us. We also find out, in case you have forgotten already, that the lady who was supposed to find us accomodations pretends she doesn't know us. And as we snoop around and bump into people, we slowly begin to discover that this pretty, charming, idyllic paradise is really seething with everything from racial hatred to political unrest.

"Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if in the next ten minutes a landing barge came ashore right in front of our house and 100 U.S. Marines hopped out with automatic rifles blasting away. After the Kuwaiti invasion last August, I figure there is no longer anyplace in this world where the U.S. Marines might not show up without notice."

She paused and looked him in the eyes. "Are you going to laugh at me? I think your eyes are telling me you think I dropped a piston and I'm not hitting on all cylinders!"

For once she read his face wrong. He was delighted he could still do this.

"Nope, no laughing. I was just thinking that I am listening to that same girl I married who used to get all worked up over some politician screwing around with his secretary or some construction company selling low strength concrete. Remember those days? God, you were a pistol!"

Karen chose to ignore his memories.

"Paul, this is serious. At 5 o'clock you and I, the Monastos, have to make a decision about this place. If we stay, we accept it, warts and all. And I'm willing to bet for every wart we can list now, there are a hundred, a thousand more out there waiting to pop up. Or we can get the hell out of

here while we still have enough money left to buy a ticket home.

"If we stay here, I think we can count on the roller coaster ride of our lives. If you work for Avery and I work for that Conner woman, we'll be right in the middle of everything going on. I can feel it. And I'll tell you something else I feel.

"This place is right on the edge of something big. And I don't mean the economic boom in tourism. Remember what that taxi driver Jack told you? There is real strife here, just below the surface. The natives here have seen all of these rich, white folks roll in here with big bank accounts. They all sit around watching American television and listening to American radio. Only a few, like Avery, know what America, or Canada for that matter, are really like. The natives have this phony picture of white America, and white Canada. They think Bill Cosby represents black America and the tourists with their rolls of 100 dollar bills typifies white America. I'm no sociologist but I don't see how they can continue to imitate the America and Canada they see on television and develop a wholesome country of their own."

Paul always left the heavy thinking to Karen. His fondest remembrances of their courting and early married days were of her locked in debate with some political or business leader in the back CBC radio studios. His wife had an natural instinct for the truth and he never ceased to wonder how she could race by the chaff and find the kernals in a pile so rapidly.

"You think there will be a revolt here, or something?"

repeat sentence

"Hey, I can barely spell Turks and Caicos; remember? I'm smart enough not to think anything, yet. But my intuition tells me the foundation this island, this country, has been built on is shakey at best. If you want to

know more about this place, stick around and ask me again in six months time."

"Does that mean you want to stay?"

Karen stopped for a minute. "Want to stay? That's tough. I guess I am willing to stay if you aren't afraid to try it with me. But if you want to go, I'll pack the bags for us."

The glass door slid open and three happy, wet, sun-tanned children raced into the living room. They were all jabbering at the same time.

"Hey, one at a time; Tony, you first" commanded Paul.

"Dad, there is a bi-big fish, I think it's a dolphin, right out there in front of our beach. We were swimming and it came up and bumped Camille in the behind," he said illustrating with his hand on his own rear end.

"See, see here. It hit me right here," giggled the 8 year old.

"Come now and see it fast before it swims away," cried Bart. And the children raced to the still open door and down to the beach.

Paul jumped up and extended his hand to Karen. "I think we have our answer. Let's go see this dolphin."

"I can't remember the last time a dolphin appeared in Lake Ontario on December 29th," smiled Karen. "I wonder if Avery arranged to send it around in front of our house, right this minute!"

Paul laughed as they tumbled through the open door. "Race you to the BEACH ~~dolphin~~!".

30-

Chapter 15

Avery Burgess is disciplined with a personal rule; he never allows himself to consider a deal done until he has a firm handshake, cash in the bank, or an ironclad contract. His every day is filled with deals of one sort or another. Some people are admitted workaholics; Avery is a non-admitted deal-aholic.

After talking with Governor Martin Burnside, he had been tempted to call Pauline Conner to tell her the news. But there were loose ends; he needed to hear Paul and Karen tell him they would both accept the offers.

Avery checked his watch; something he did several dozen times each day, often subconsciously. There was less than a hour before Paul would return with the written statement for Burnside, and hopefully Karen's agreement. He sat under the overhanging cabana roof of the guest and pool house staring at grand daughter Rose working with the McClaskeys. They were certain he was memorizing every move; in truth his eyes stared but his mind was locked in battle miles away.

He had expected Burnside's agreement to his plan of making an example of Minister Harvey. Two aspects of the deal bothered him. First, there was the possibility that as Harvey went down the primrose path, chunks of his soon-to-be-decaying flesh might end up on Avery's doorstep. When the GDP landslided into political power in 1988, Avery retreated into a shell of non-political involvement. When 'his boys' were in power, the more business oriented NDC or National Democratic Coalition, his own business activities and the official acts of government were often so closely intertwined it became difficult to separate them. The day the GDP swore itself in before Governor Burnside and assumed the reins of elected government, Avery moved

several large fireproof and tamper proof locked file cabinets from his private office area into the bomb and storm-proof concrete walled inner sanctum of the home office building. Here now rested the business and shadow government records of 8 continuous years of the NDC; including the seedy weeks surrounding the American arrest and later conviction of his own handpicked Chief Minister, Nat Simpson.

The day of Simpson's incarceration was the most traumatic of Avery's life; March 6, 1986. That Nat might be guilty was not in question; Avery knew the man's weaknesses. That the British Governor would actually waste Simpson to the Americans as a way of sending a strong message to all natives was incomprehensible. In Avery's mind, there were a dozen other ways to send the same message without setting up Nat for the Americans. The arrest of his close friend and protegee warned Avery that anyone, himself included, was expendable in the British mind. He developed a brand new regimin of caution ~~starting~~ beginning only minutes after Nat was arrested. His relationship with the British government deteriorated rapidly after the Simpson affair and the British were keenly aware of this change on Avery's part. Only the 1988 arrival of Governor Burnside started the healing of this wound; Avery suspected Burnside made this healing process a top personal priority.

The tone of Governor Burnside on the telephone that morning was the second thing now bothering Avery. Burnside was always cordial, as indeed he was this morning. But seldom as curt or guarded as his tone inferred today. The Governor implied they had other indescretions by Harvey as well. The Governor suggested that while the Monasto work permit matter might not be enough to hang Harvey from the yard arm by itself, when combined with other charges the sum of them all would accomplish their aim. Now Avery was

concerned what those other indescretions might be, and whether he himself might be splattered with mud as they surfaced.

Avery's dislike and contempt for the amateur politicians now in power was well known to Burnside and the other British appointees. The NDP 'buffoons', as Avery sometimes labeled them privately, were so careless and childlike in their approach to government they embarassed him daily in the business world. He calculated their continued presence in government power was slowing down the rate of national development by at least 50%.

So Avery felt alone; caught between the NDP buffoons and the British mentality which had wasted a bright but careless former chief minister. Avery was not optimistic about the long term viability of his country under either of the two; he trusted neither. And his mind constantly searched for some logical direction his island of Portobello could move to become free of both.

If he had reached this state of mind ten years prior, he might have gathered up his family and flown to the United States where their American passports would guarantee them a life of reasonable freedom and modest luxury. Today, in 1990, his assets here were so large he could no longer afford to simply walk-away. He often asked himself "And if I did such a thing, taking with me perhaps ten million in cash, how would I feel about leaving behind all of the real estate, businesses and successes I have built here?" The answer was always the same. "Portobello is mine; no-place else in the world will ever be, no matter how much cash we have." No, Avery Burgess and family could not slip away; the deal making that counted was all on this island. No place else on earth would ever compare.

Water splashed on his arms; it was Rose running towards him from the

pool. "Pa, Pa" she cried "did you see me dive? Susie says I am better each day; do you think so?" and she threw her wet arms around her grandfather.

"Of course I do Rose" he beamed. "You are going to be the first Olympic Champion, ever, from the Turks and Caicos Islands!"

And he quickly thought to himself 'And that's one thing I could never say if we fled to America.'

A few hundred yards away from Avery's pool, Karen and Paul were settling the children down to the Disney Channel. Five o'clock was fast approaching.

"Daddy and I will be just a little while; not more than an hour. OK?"

Only Tony answered. "We'll be alright, Mom; good luck."

Karen ran her hand through his tossled hair and smiled back.

"Alright Mr. Monasto, let's do it!" and she grabbed Paul's hand and yanked towards the doorway. Paul resisted the tugging but followed along obediently.

The door was closing behind them as he spoke.

"I know we've decided to do this, but I'm still not sure-" he began.

"We are sure; I am sure and so are you. This is going to be fun; remember how excited we were about coming here? Well, we did it and now we are simply sliding some new pieces into the puzzle. Hey, we knew this wasn't going to be Toronto!"

The walk from Golden Shores unit 7 to Avery's front gate passed in silence. Burgess's estate was surrounded, in the style of Miami wealthy suburbs, with a tall 8 foot concrete and stone fence. The fence and the usually open ornamental black wrought iron gates were more for show than security. Although the grounds were now planted, Avery had MORE extensive plans to complete this area with a tropical jungle flavor. The size of the four

building complex was impressive but lacked the look of completion or warmth. Under their feet the crunch of compressed sand gave away to the firmness of poured concrete as they passed through the gate. Karen was struck by the simplicity; 'This place has great potential' she thought to herself.

"This way" ~~said~~ MOTIONED Paul, grabbing her hand and leading her around to the left. They could hear voices from behind the house. As they came closer, a young girl with an accent was shouting "Pa, Pa ... watch me!".

Avery saw Karen and Paul come around the house and he waved them to go into the office area. He stood only feet from a temporary diving platform hastily assembled under Doctor McClaskey's direction just prior to Christmas. At the door to the office, Karen pulled on Paul's hand to stop so she could watch the girl dive. A white lady and a white man, both very athletic looking, stood on either side of the platform. The lady was giving instructions, which Karen could not hear, to the young black girl.

Finally, the girl approached the edge of the platform, assumed a position and froze. There were more instructions from the white lady; then silence. The girl, who appeared to be about Bart's age, glided from the platform and her body broke the surface of the pool with hardly a ripple. Both white people broke into applause as the young girl surfaced and Avery joined the clapping. Then he gave a thumbs up signal to the girl, and smiling widely strode to the Monastos.

"Good afternoon" he greeted. Paul opened the door to enter the building.

"My grand daughter aspires to be an Olympic class diver" he continued. "That's Doctor McClaskey from the University of Michigan and his wife Susie helping her with the fine points."

'McClaskey?' thought Karen to herself. That was a familiar name.

"Why do I think McClaskey rings a bell?" Karen asked.

"Susie was on the U.S. Olympic team once" Avery began. "Since then she has been an Olympic coach for the USA. 'Doc' is the swim team coach at Michigan."

"I would say your grand daughter is very fortunate to have such skilled help" suggested Karen. Paul squeezed her hand; a signal to cut out the talk and get inside. They all entered and followed Avery to his office. The rest of the building appeared to be empty of people. As they walked Paul studied closely the layout. This morning he had seen graphic examples of why Burgess wanted him on the island. Still, his trained eye as a carpenter told him something else was unusual about this building. For openers, the outside bulk didn't quite match the space he could see inside.

"Three rooms?" he asked as they took chairs.

"Here?" asked Avery.

"Yes, in this building."

Avery smiled showing his sizeable picture perfect front teeth. "Well, yes. There is an office for the accountants, my son's office and this one."

"It just seems larger from the outside."

"There are some sizeable storage closets; a business such as this generates no end of paperwork, even though we have no income tax or government reports to file at year end."

Karen was now anxious to get on with the conversation they came here to hold. "Mr. Burgess-."

"Please, Avery."

"Avery, Paul has explained everything to me and I came over with him because there are some questions I have-."

"Of course, I was pleased to see you come around the corner with your husband. Now, what are your questions?"

"First, I have barely met Mrs. Conner and that was at church. I think I should do this and talk with her before I make up my mind."

"Of course; I anticipated that. Let me explain my position in this matter. Pauline Conner is a close friend and one of the best business people on this island. I have great respect for her business abilities. Through the island grape vine, she is aware of your background and some of the circumstances of your arrival. But I would not presume to speak for her; the radio stations are hers to run as she chooses. I want Paul to work for me; and, as Pauline's friend, I am trying to help her with a management problem at the stations. I know if the role were reversed, she would help me in the same way. When you are ready to see Pauline, I'll call her."

"Mr. Burgess, ahhh Avery ... is Paul's job in any way dependent upon my taking the radio job?"

The woman's eyes bored through him. Avery was caught unprepared by her directness. He paused before answering, and Karen noticed. Paul was fidgeting in his chair. His wife's directness never surprised him, but it did sometimes make him nervous.

"Karen, each of you is a separate person. There are two, unrelated positions here offered. I do think your family would be much happier if both you and Paul were working; it can be very expensive to live on this island and I'd hate to lose Paul because the expenses here were too great."

Karen smiled. She'd have to rise much earlier in the morning to catch Avery Burgess the way she so easily trapped Paul.

"Then my final question. Paul, rather we, are in this situation because

of his work permit being granted through political channels. I believe I do understand government is issuing no new work permits. Paul says you promised him his own work and residency permit; but what about my work permit? Has anyone thought about that?"

Now it was Avery's opportunity to smile. He cupped his hands together on the desk and leaned forward in the chair.

"You are very thorough Karen. I can see why your reputation in journalism is so good. Yes, your work permit has been thought of; and dealt with. Mrs. Conner's radio station manager permit does not specify a particular person. As long as she releases the present manager before you begin work, you will be legal. You must still take the medical exam and fill out the normal immigration department papers, of course. Mrs.Conner will help you with this."

"Good. I am satisified with the answers. Paul, have I missed anything?"

Paul coughed. He was still nervous.

"Oh no; that's it."

"Then what is our answer, Paul?"

He reached into his pocket for the folded set of three pages passing them to Avery. "This is my statement. Do you want to check it over?"

"I will read them but if you are satisified with the words you have written, I'm sure ... the Governor will also be." He leaned back in his chair and frowned. Paul had seen the same look during their morning meeting.

"Tomorrow is Sunday. Karen, I will arrange a meeting for tomorrow or Monday with Pauline. Paul, this statement" and he raised the three folded sheets of paper "will go directly to Governor Burnside Monday. You should

report to Larry Harvey's place of business Monday morning just as if none of this had happened; or was happening. I believe you all plan to stay here until the 3rd; that's next Friday. I suggest Karen that you keep a low profile until after you have moved. Paul, it would not be wise for Larry Harvey to know you are staying here. There should be no connection between us until after your trip to Florida; OK?"

"Yes, but the shop will surely want to know where to reach me?"

"Ahh yes. I suggest you tell them you won't have a permanent place to stay until next Friday and then make sure they understand you will be at the Whitebourn home; that is it, isn't it?"

Paul looked at Karen; his eyes said 'Is that the name?'. She picked up the cue.

"Yes, that's the one. I'd like to get in there sooner, as much as we enjoy Golden Shores. Maybe Jill Murphy can speed it up?"

"It probably depends upon when David and Petula are leaving for the states; I can check on that for you."

"If you would; I planned to ask Jill in church tomorrow morning."

'Church?' Paul turned quickly to Karen. She chose to ignore his stare.

"I think we should get back to our children. Avery, your help with our problems has made all of the difference. Without it, we would be out of here on the first airplane to Toronto. Paul and I don't know how to thank you-."

Avery pushed himself up from the chair with some obvious difficulty. Paul and Karen stood as well.

"Thank me in six months after you are settled in; for now, Paul is going to help me solve a big problem. And you will do the same for Pauline. Being helpful is good; but this is a two way street-."

Karen pushed her two hands together and rubbed; smiling.

"Yes, one hand washes the other hand!"

Avery broke into a smile, laughed, and shook his head.

"You two, and your children, will be a blessing to our community. Thank you for coming to see me." And they were dismissed.

Neither Paul nor Karen said a word until they felt the crunch of sand beneath their feet.

"You had me worried a couple of times, especially when you asked him if my job depended on your taking the radio station job" Paul began. "Why did you do that?"

Karen stopped walking and Paul took a couple of steps before realizing he was alone.

"Honesty. I wanted Avery to know I am not afraid of the truth. I didn't wish there to be any misconceptions. He is bright enough to realize we had to connect the two together. Frankly, his answer was imprecise; almost like a politician taking a question and then answering something totally unrelated. I didn't expect him to flat out admit to me he saw us as a package; but I want him to know we think he sees us this way. Now he's on notice and he'll think about that."

"I guess I just don't want to make any waves; you know, get people upset with us" Paul explained. "I think sometimes you have to swallow hard and do what somebody wants."

"Sometimes, but not this time. I like to know the ground rules. Now Avery knows my rules."

"Say, what was that about church tomorrow. We hadn't talked about that, you know!"

"You can't tell me you didn't enjoy going to church last Sunday?"

"I did. But I'm not ready to agree to go back to church, you know ... regular. Last Sunday was special, but every Sunday?"

"I think it is important we try to look like the perfect family here, at least in the beginning. Church would help, and I know you noticed how Mrs. Conner sort of runs it. I have the feeling if we support her church, I'll get along much better with her."

Paul was shaking his head. And he was getting angry as Karen could tell.

"There you go; it is not Mrs. Conner's church, it is the catholic church! And that's one of the reasons why I ran away from home and the church when I was 16. My family never called the church 'our church'; it was always Father O'Malley's church. As if he owned it or something. And we did everything for Father O'Malley, not the church or ourselves. I don't like it-."

Karen was surprised and taken back. In all of their years together, Paul had never spoken much about his church feelings. She knew how involved he had been as an altar boy and server but he never confided his real reasons for running away from it all. Now she was beginning to see...

"I'm sorry honey. I didn't ~~realize~~ know. Look, let me at least take the kids tomorrow, OK? I still think it is the best thing to do."

Paul took both of her hands in his own and gazed at her face. He now realized he had brought to the surface an old wound. It was painful for him, and for Karen as well.

"Let's get back to the kids; it's almost dinner time."

...

Polly Conner's dinner meal was smorgasboard style. Her holiday guests, save one, would be leaving on the Sunday afternoon plane. Maryanne, Julian

and Wanda had insisted they be allowed to help with the final supper. Trudy Wigh had dragged her husband down the beach to Club Med for a final look at the naked bodies adorning the sand.

Amidst the babble of four women engaged in the preparation of a sizeable meal Polly detected the jingle of a telephone. Halfway between her office and bedroom, she excused herself and headed for the office phone. It was the yellow phone blinking as she entered the room.

"Polly here," she responded, picking up the instrument.

"Pauline, I have good news," the voice began. Polly smiled to herself recognizing Avery's deep tones.

"I haven't heard from you in days; I thought you might have forgotten me," she teased.

"Are you fishing again?" he teased back. "OK, I could have called you several times to give you a running account of our deal's progress. But in this case I thought it best to wait until we had a done-deal."

"Tell me more" she enthused, sitting down on her high backed office chair after scooping a cat from the seat.

"Karen Monasto has agreed to come to work for you. But, she wants to talk with you about it first."

Polly could not control a nervous laugh and a feeling of considerable excitement.

"I didn't expect you to act as my employment agency. How did it happen? How did you do it?"

"A long story. I think it best I save it for now. Let's just say I have a new employee and you do too. Can you see her tomorrow?"

"That's tough. I have church in the morning, after that I want to stop at

the agency office. And then I have house guests, let's see ... 8 in all, to go to the airport. Yes, I know. After the plane, I could see her in the afternoon." Her eyes twinkled as she thought of her plans for the evening.

"Why don't you call her and arrange it? She's at 4274, our unit 7-."

"4274?"

"Yes. And one more thing. Before you see her, I think we should talk, in person, for a few minutes. She is a very bright lady and you should be forewarned."

"You have some examples to relate?"

"Yes, but only in person."

Polly heard the tone of apprehension in Avery's voice.

"Might she be too bright?"

"Nothing you can't handle, my dear. Let me suggest however you will never have a problem with the news being improperly reported again. She won't make the mistakes others have done."

Polly was intrigued.

"Suppose I come by at say 8 in the morning, on the way to church?"

"That will be fine; see you then."

"God bless," and the dial tone returned.

Polly could barely contain herself. A white cat had nuzzzled back to her lap as she talked with Avery. Setting the telephone down she grabbed for the docile animal and twirled it above her head. Caught unaware, the cat shrieked and Polly could not help but laugh aloud. She dropped the animal back in her lap and picked up the phone again. She dialed; 4274.

"Hello, this is Camille," said the little voice. "Can I help you?"

"Camille, this is Pauline Conner. May I speak with your mother please?"

Polly could her the muffled voice of the girl against other sounds.

"Mommy, it is for you. Mrs. Conner."

Polly heard Paul's voice say something but the only word she caught was 'fast'. Then the sound of the phone handset being laid down on tile. Presently she heard Karen's voice.

"Mrs. Conner, this is Karen."

"Good evening Karen. I am sorry to bother you at dinner time but Avery Burgess has just told me the good news. Could we get together tomorrow afternoon?"

"Yes, of course. What time and where should I meet you?"

"Let's say 4 and how about here; my house will be ...almost empty and we shouldn't be disturbed. Do you know where my house is?"

Karen was smiling to herself. Anyone who had been here even two days knew the Conner estate; there was only one private home directly on Grace Bay and it was a landmark for landlubbers and sailors alike.

"Yes, of course. 4 then; should I bring anything with me?"

Polly wanted her alone, not with family or husband. But perhaps?

"No, come alone. Unless you happen to have any examples of your work in Canada?"

Karen had saved one reel of tape, a composite from some of her best investigative newscasts. It was the only 'work' momento she had held onto through the move.

"I may have a tape of some newscasts but I'm afraid it will be on the reel to reel format. Do you have-?"

"Please bring it along. I have a reel to reel machine here someplace."

"Until tomorrow -"

"-at 4; good evening."

"Oh, wait. I'll see you in church tomorrow morning also!"

Polly's eyes chattered with a fervor. 'A new, permanent church family!' flashed through her mind.

"Wonderful; see you in church; good-bye."

The phone back in the cradle, Polly sat stroking her furry laptop companion. 'This could be an excellent year's end' she told herself. 'Getting a true professional into the radio station slot will really help me. And I am about to have 4 days alone with a 17 year old male who fairly explodes through his polyester swim trunks!'. Her hands were wet from perspiration at the fantasy of what could be ahead. The cat scattered as she stood and reached to straighten her loose skirt. There was a familiar wetness between her legs as she stopped in the bathroom before returning to the kitchen.

-end 15/

Chapter Sixteen

Cable and Wireless engineer John Brown arrived at the Grand Turk airport just as the Sunday morning sun was peeking through a pink cloud bank lying on the horizon to the east. He carried a small tool box fitted with test equipment. His traveling companion, Reggie Seybold, was dressed in a khaki colored cotton suit of the cut and style Brits of nobility wore in Africa. He did not look like a telephone technician and when C&W boss Robin Lewster arrived minutes later there was infuriated anger.

"Nobody dresses like that here." he told Seybold. "You stand out like a person draped in a British flag!"

Seybold was not accustomed to being dressed down by a bush league telephone company bureaucrat. "Who the hell are you to tell me how to dress?" he shot back.

Lewster gazed about to see who was within earshot. The airport was deserted save for a Haitian sweeping and mopping the floor. Lewster motioned for Seybold to follow him towards a corner of Dora's restaurant. It was not yet open so they could continue in privacy.

"We've gone to some trouble to disguise you as a telephone technician" he began. "And you show up looking like Terry Thomas dressed for an African Safari movie. The whole idea is for you to blend in, and not attract attention. I cannot allow you to travel to Portobello dressed like that. Everyone who sees you today will remember you!"

Seybold was taken back; he knew Lewster was probably right. But the safari suit had looked so dashing in the London shop window, and, afterall the British West Indies or Africa, wern't they about the same?

"Can we afford the time for me to go back and change?" he asked.

"We can't afford not to," was the curt response.

Brown handed over their joint Kitina hotel room key and Lewster passed over his company car keys.

"Hurry back," Lewster urged.

Cable and Wireless had arranged for a private charter for the two men. The pilot did agree to be on hand at sun-up. Fifteen minutes after sun-up, only Lewster, Brown and the Haitian floor cleaner were at the airport.

Lewster sat silently with Brown after Seybold left, wondering if his outburst might come back to haunt him. 'He is here to help me,' he thought. 'I was the one who went to our legal department for their agreement; we needed a knowledgeable attorney here to witness everything going on, and to provide expert legal testimony if this matter comes to court. I hope I have not made him angry; well, too angry!'

"Did I do wrongly?" he asked of Brown. The engineer was lost in his own engineering thoughts and ~~his~~ a puzzled look told Lewster he should try again.

"Sending him back to change; was that wrong?"

"Oh no, I think not. I did wonder about his dress when he pulled that suit from his locker this morning. Perhaps I should have said something?"

"No, you are just the engineer. Nobody expects you to be sensitive to dress matters."

A more sensitive man would have been offended at Lewster's curt put down. Brown was not; he had been an engineer all of his adult life and was accustomed to his station in life. He earned good money and he traveled the world. He didn't pretend to understand the management end of the telephone business; he tolerated those who did.

"Hey Mister telephone; mornin'!"

A thin, short black man dressed in a white shirt with make believe military stripes on the shoulders was walking through the airport building door. Here, at last, was the tardy pilot. Robin Lewster made an obvious point of studying his watch.

"Me late?" smiled the pilot. "Big party last night, plenty girls." And holding his head between his hands and shaking it, "Plenty rum too!"

Lewster was not interested in the man's extra-cirricular activities.

"Yes, you are behind schedule. It's a good thing I don't run the telephone company like you run your airline."

"Five minutes," smiled the pilot. "You ready?"

Lewster lied. "Yes, quite. Please speed it up!"

The pilot disappeared through the building and presently they heard a single engine Cessna warming up. Simultaneously Seybold pulled up in front of the building and popped from the car. Now he was dressed in a scottish plaid shirt and new designer blue jeans. Lewster was still not pleased, but he decided against mentioning his displeasure.

"Right away," he called and motioned for Brown to follow him with Seybold to the tarmac and the waiting Cessna.

Reaching the plane, Lewster huddled with the two giving final instructions under the roar of the engine.

"Remember," he yelled at Brown "2777; just one word, yes. No more. Then a call to me in similar fashion." He rather fancied the Governor's sense of the melodramatic. "The pilot will wait for you at the airport. A blue-grey van with the keys under the floormat awaits you. Talk to no-one, document everything, disturb nothing. Understood?"

Both men nodded. ~~One by one~~ They climbed into the tiny four-seater

aircraft and were off. Lewster looked at his watch; 6:30 AM.

popped from cat's paw

Polly Conner's alarm radio popped on at 6:30 AM. Of her four stations, she preferred the easy listening format to awaken ~~to~~ her; unless of course she was sharing her bed. Then she was more thoughtful of the type of music her companion might prefer. This morning she was alone.

Three cats stirred as the music came on. At first Polly curled into a ball, very aware she was alone. As her mind began to function, she rolled over to survey the bedroom creating a series of mental notes.

'The cats will have to be shut up in the den tonight; young Shawn has shown an aversion to my lap pets. Lannie has been told to place the royal blue ~~satin~~ SILK sheets on the bed. To that I must add a complete change of the bathroom. A short, white, cotton robe will be placed over the chair on 'his' side of the bed. Neil Diamond tapes must be loaded into the cassette player.'

With a burst of energy Polly shot from the bed and rushed to her bathroom. In the back of her mind she had designed and redesigned this bath dozens of times, trying to fit a hot tub into the floorplan. After Bill's death she ~~had~~ ripped out his shower and replaced it with a larger unit featuring twin spray heads and a molded seat. This had been a disappointment to her; the seat was too shallow for a man to balance her on his lap and the shower heads were too high for proper body excitation. Many of her closeted-videotape movies prominently featured two or three people sharing a hot tub. One day she intended to find out if hot water bubbling about the body was as exciting as a mouthful of hot water.

Scrubbing her teeth she slowed down to read her own handwriting from a piece of paper she had ~~pinned~~ taped to the mirror just before retiring.

'NO. 1 - Avery 7:45 AM

'NO. 2 - Church 8:45

'NO. 3 - Travel Agency 11 AM

'NO. 4 - Home/Lunch 12:30

'NO. 5 - To Airport 1:45

'NO. 6 - Karen M. 4PM

'NO. 7 - S/Dinner 7PM'

Polly turned on the water and carried her plans for the 7 PM dinner under the twin showerheads.

'Shawn is staying because I talked Wanda and Jim into allowing him to go directly back to the University of Maryland from here; January 2nd. I have suggested he move out of the apartment down to one of the guest rooms here in the house, so he won't feel so alone.'

She pinched her liposuction restructured buttox to test the flab content. 'Still solid' she mused. Generous amounts of lather now covered her chest from neck to low abdomen hair line. Her medically-enlarged breasts more than filled her hands, and finger tips rubbed gently as swirls of soap foamed around hardened nipples.

'Shawn has shown little interest in me, personally; but then I am older than his mother. Oddly' she thought 'he has also shown no real interest in the topless Club Med extroverts that steadily parade by my beachside cabana.'

'Perhaps I am over-estimating his interest in women, or my appeal for such a young man. His is but 17!' This thought concerned her greatly and she quickly rinsed the suds from her body, reaching for a towel and shutting off the water flow. The clock said nearly 7 AM. Instinctively she went to

the bedroom to turn up the radio volume.

"Good morning. It is 7 AM in the Turks and Caicos Islands and this is Robert Manchester with the Sunday morning news."

Karen rolled over in bed is disbelief. Yes, the clock did say 7 AM. She had not slept well and not anxious to leave her bed.

"An automobile and rental scooter accident last evening in Blue Hills has left a Haitian worker critically injured at the Portobello Health Medical Center. Doctor Habiss reports the man, 32 year old Abdon St. Pierre, suffered massive internal injuries including a partially collapsed lung. PHMC is holding the man until his condition is stable enough to allow air transport to Haiti for additional medical care."

'Damn Manchester' thought Polly to herself, pulling on a slip; 'how many times have I told that fool to never start off the news with a traffic accident. Tourists come here to escape, not be reminded of the ugly side of life!'

"Provo's hotels continue this morning to be under intense pressure as the island goes into its second week with more tourists than tourist beds. More than 800 people left the island on Saturday flights but the immigration department reports slightly more than this, 842 by their count, came in on the same planes. Restaurants have been exceedingly busy all week and dining reservations are recommended, especially for tonight since many restaurants are closed on Sundays."

"Peter, I am getting the children up. Peter - did you hear that item? Peter?"

"Club Med is holding a public soccer match this afternoon at 3 PM on their sports field just south of club grounds. Last Sunday's event attracted

a crowd of nearly 600 local residents as the local boys captained by Sargeant Baptiste of the police department fought a valiant but losing battle to the Club's C.O. team. If you plan to attend today, we recommend you show up no later than 2:30 PM to gain entry to the normally closed club grounds."

Polly was pulling her dress down over her head. 'At least he remembered to plug the club's activity. Thank God in a week or so he'll be gone...I hope!'

"WIV sources in Grand Turk report there may soon be government sanctions against Cable and Wireless. Two weeks ago Chief Minister Orville Smythe charged the British government with tapping his phones, and assigning undercover people to trail him. Smythe's public affairs officer late Saturday revealed to WIV news there is evidence of phone tapping by Cable and Wireless and he intends to bring charges against the company on Monday morning."

out of place → "Karen, did you hear that? Karen?"

Polly stood in shock before her full length mirror. Only two weeks prior her station had broadcast a news item of a similar nature. She had been called on the carpet by the Chief Secretary, speaking for the Governor, when she returned from her Christmas shopping trip. And she ~~had~~ INTURN read the riot act to Manchester.

'I told him to never, never broadcast an item such as that again without checking with me first. Now here it is again. And it is obvious where it started; he practically said Smythe's office planted the story.'

"God help me to get through this until Karen goes to work" she pleaded outloud.

Polly was not the only person who reacted violently to the news item. Governor Martin Burnside's blood was boiling as he ~~reached~~ quickly dialed ~~for~~ his telephone.

"Jeremy-."

"I heard it."

"What now?"

"I'd say our time table may change. ~~Should~~ Shall I meet you in the office?"

"No, come here. I'll send Mindy to church with John."

Less than a mile away Larry Harvey's telephone rang as well.

"You ~~listen~~ hear news," the voice said to a groggy Harvey.

"What news?"

"WIV. They say the CM bring charges on Cable Wireless 'morrow morning. He have evidence they tap phones."

"Christ. Get over here. Now."

The charter flight was receiving landing instructions from the Portobello tower.

"Ahhh Roger 43-zero. Wind from the east southeast at ten, pressure 29 point 95 and rising. Approach from the west on runway 17. You are clear to land."

The small Cessna aligned with the 8,000 foot runway and gently touched down. More than 1,000 feet from the turn off to the parking area it rolled to a near stop and began moving again, making the sharp left turn towards the terminal building. The pilot manuevered the plane to a parking area, checked his instruments and advised the tower he would be on the ground for up to four hours. The engine shut down, Seybold and Brown climbed out with their instrument box.

Walking through the nearly deserted terminal to the street side parking, Brown spotted the promised blue-grey van. Under the floormat, the keys.

"All aboard?" he said to Seybold.

"So this is Portobello?"

"Part of it; it's about a 15 minute ride to the Stubbs Road exchange."

Avery Burgess was pacing in his office when Polly arrived. She had pulled through the gates and parked adjacent to his garage. Ignoring the sounds of a waking household, ~~and~~ she went directly to his office.

"Avery?"

"Pauline; come in, back here."

Through the open door she could see his concerned expression. For one of the few times in their acquaintance, he didn't smile at her.

"Something is wrong Avery; what is it?"

"Did you hear your own newscast this morning?" he began.

"Yes, and I-."

"Never mind, it's too late now. I'm more concerned about the story than the fact your station broadcast it; for now. Something big is happening, and I don't know what it is."

"What do you mean something big?"

Avery threw his (caution to the winds) and gave Polly a detailed account of his Saturday morning telephone call to the Governor.

"And you think Minister Harvey is somehow involved in this phone tapping? Do you really think there is such a thing? I just thought it was more of Smythe's paranoia-"

"I hope that is all it is. But if we have phone tapping, and Harvey is involved, we could have a full scale explosion on our hands."

"Why don't you call Burnside-."

"To be honest with you, I am afraid to use the phone! If phones are being tapped, mine would be prime targets, especially if someone like Harvey is behind it. You know about his background?"

"No."

"Ten years ago he was the first telephone company employee on this island. He and Bill were friends, although not close as I recall. I think he hung around Bill hoping for a job with the TV stations."

"I didn't realize that." Now Polly was thinking about how she used the phone, and all of the business deals she discussed. "God, if my lines are tapped..."

"Exactly. Even if there is no truth to this at all, there are dozens, hundreds of people all over this island right now who are sweating. You know, that was a stupid thing to broadcast-."

Polly tried to explain to Avery the safeguards she had put into place after the last such episode. "I was home all evening and Manchester could have reached me with no effort. I wonder if he does things like this on purpose, to make me angry? It is obvious the CM considers him an important outlet to plant stories."

" Well, that brings us to Karen. I know you have to get to church so I'll make this brief. She is very bright and she can read your mind. You really have to think before you answer her; she is always one or two questions ahead of you when she asks one."

"I lived with Bill for three years; I have some experience-"

"I told her your work permit is for the job, not for a person. So she knows you can fire Manchester and put her on with short notice. Remember

however that she will need to get a medical check and fill out the immigration department papers." Avery drew a breath.

"There is something else, I can tell-."

"Yes, two more things. I have never tried to tell you how to run your radio stations. I will not do so now. But I would like to have Karen for about a day when she starts so I can plant some history and perspective in her mind before she goes on the air. You know, from the 'native' viewpoint?"

"That is a very kind offer. I plan to do the same but it would be so much better coming from you. Agreed. And the last thing?"

"Her salary. I think she should be paid the same thing you pay Manchester."

"But he is alone and she has Paul's income as well-."

"Pauline, she will quickly find out how much Manchester has been getting. Don't start her off at any less, it will come back to hurt you."

"I have never turned away from your advice; OK, I'll do it."

"Good girl. Now run to church and check with me later today. If I know more about this telephone thing, I'll suggest you come by to see me in person."

Polly took his large hands and squeezed hard. "God bless Avery."

He squeezed back and smiled at her. 'Yes, you will make some billionaire a fine wife one of these days,' he thought to himself.

Brown and Seybold were approaching the Stubbs Road exchange. A sizeable red and white painted steel tower laced with microwave dishes stood tall above the concrete block building. They had rode most of the way without speaking; Seybold had asked a few questions about the WIV tower and satellite dishes as they passed, and then seemed lost in thought.

"This is our best installation," Brown began as they pulled off the rutted road onto the rock strewn driveway. "We went digital here first, and then this spring we changed the others over as well. You know that it's because these are digital that the exchange synthesizer works in this system? If these were still analog, the synthesizer wouldn't function."

The discussion was definently too technical for the lawyer. He grunted and nodded that he understood.

"Can you grab the test box?" Brown asked shutting the van's engine down. Seybold reached for it behind the seat and joined Brown at the building. THE en heavily laden chain was dangling as He ~~Brown~~ tried to locate the proper key.

Once inside Brown had a thought.

"I'm going back outside to move the van behind the building. That way nobody will see we are here; just in case." And he went back outside to do it.

Seybold had been an attorney for Cable and Wireless 15 years. He joined them fresh out of University and had grown up within the firm dealing mostly with government contracts and negotiations. His favorite Cable and Wireless 'city' was Hong Kong, although his last visit there had been a sad one when he realized the colony was accelerating into the dis-engagement mode as 1997 approached.

Brown came back through the door, shut it, and and motioned for Reggie to follow him.

"In a digital exchange, all of the connections are done with printed circuit connectors. On Grand Turk I found small diameter wires slipped in under the PC connectors to make the illegal tap. Since there are so few real wires left in the equipment racks anymore, these tap wires stand out like a

Red Flag

sore thumb. You have to start systematically at the top of a rack, like this," he said pointing to a rack before them, "and run your finger down the connections. Each of these little plugs connects a single telephone to the exchange. See, no wires here. Now, as we go down - well, look at this!"

His finger had stopped where two tiny green wires were crossing the circuit board and disappearing under a plug.

"That's a tap?"

"That's a tap. And we haven't been here even one minute!"

"How do we call out of here?" Seybold asked.

"2777?" checked Brown.

"First, and then Lewster at 2400."

Brown went to a small control console on a desk, picked up a handset, and threw a switch. He was greeted with a dial tone and dialed 2777. The phone rang for nearly 30 seconds.

"Yes?" It was Governor Burnside.

"Yes" repeated Brown. There was a silence.

"You did say yes?" the Governor repeated.

"Yes."

The Governor hung his telephone up, and turned to Jeremy McTabbish who had arrived only ~~a few minutes~~ MOMENTS before.

"That was our message. It was a yes."

"Damn it all," responded McTabbish. "I had actually hoped they wouldn't find anything. Now we have a national, not a local problem."

"Here's my concern now. We must assume Harvey heard the newscast as well. He is probably considering whether he should yank everything out today before Smythe blows the whistle in public tomorrow. I think we have to do

something to protect our evidence, even if we never get the opportunity to catch Harvey red handed."

"My thoughts exactly. I believe we should station someone at each of the exchanges until we have a better plan. And since we don't know who is doing the actual work in the exchanges, we have to suspect every telephone worker who comes to the exchanges in the interim."

"Now that is a possibility. What was the name of the telephone tech on this island whom you observed going into and out of Plentiful's house?"

"Marvin Cox."

"Can we fairly assume Cox is in on it here?"

"I do."

"Suppose we pick him up immediately and isolate him from Harvey and everyone else?"

"How do you propose to isolate him?"

"Well, we could lock him up in the brig here at Waterloo where you and Livingston could take turns standing over him?"

"Or suppose we put him on a plane under guard and ship him out, say to Cayman where he can be held securely?" The attorney general did not fancy guard duty.

"How about both; pick him up as quickly as possible, detain him here just long enough to question him and then arrange for his shipment to Cayman?"

"Yes, I like that. We might get lucky and have him give us a statement. We could suggest to him that if he doesn't give us a statement, now, he is going to be transported to a different country. That should shake him up." The AG's adrenilin was flowing now; this was just like the movies!

"Good, very good. The locals really get frightened when they think they

are being shipped out. There is something comforting to them about being on home soil."

"It could be the Nat Simpson episode; say what you will about how that was bungled, it left a deep impression on minds here," smiled the AG."Now, what do we invoke here? What is our reason for detaining and isolating him?" The governor's eyes furrowed and then snapped open widely.

"Are we prepared to charge my own hot-line telephone is tapped?"

"Of course we are, but what-."

"National security; that tap makes a mockery of the security of this country. And only I have descretion in such a matter. Without hesitation, I evoke national security charges in this case!"

"Of course; you can sign the pick-up order yourself, it avoids the police department entirely. If I take an officer with me, I can pick Cox up and transport him to the brig here. Then we'll issue a statement that the security of this colony has been threatened and you have unwrapped powers to protect the country. Perfect."

The Governor reached for a legal pad on his desk and began writing. "We need some help, physical help. Call Livingston and get him over here. But be careful what you say!"

In ten minutes the Governor had a plan outlined on paper. Jeremy had contacted Livingston and then retired to a corner chair to await the Governor's next words.

"Jeremy, try to reach Robin Lewster and ask him to come here as well ~~immediately.~~" He went back to his notepad and turned a new page. Ten more minutes went by. Jeremy had found Lewster in the Cable and Wireless office. He also found him more than willing to drop everything and rush to

Waterloo.

It was 9:30. Brown and Seybold had now found 9 taps and Brown was engaged in checking the numbers and their new destination while Seybold, now proficient at spotting a tap, was continuing the rack by rack survey. As he found each new tap he read aloud the numbers.

"Another; let's see, 4275."

"4-2-7-5. Got it. That makes ten so far. How much more to check?"

"Three more racks; what was the number in Grand Turk; 19?"

"That's it. Possibly not as many here."

There was a noise at the door and both men stopped talking. A key entered the lock and the door swung open. Samuel Stubbs stepped inside with his back ~~half~~ turned towards them, shut the door and took several steps before he realized he was not alone.

"What the hell-?" he began, seeing Seybold crouched behind a rack.

"It's OK Samuel," spoke up Brown; "it's me, John Brown".

Only it wasn't OK. Samuel had received a panic call from Harvey with instructions to beat it to the exchange and disconnect all taps. He wasn't told why, just what to do. Harvey's instructions to him included his going back to the equipment apartment after removing the taps, and taking all of the equipment out of the building. Samuel was nervous because he didn't ~~know~~ understand what was ~~going on~~ really happening. Now he knew. A stranger was behind an equipment rack inspecting plugs and UK engineer Brown was standing in the corner where all of his tapped lines fed into a trunk line.

"Jesus Christ!" he exclaimed, jumped for the door and threw it open disappearing into the bright sunshine.

Seybold was the first to react. He jumped ~~back~~ to his feet and ran after

Samuel. He was just in time to see the man throw himself into a van identical to their own and kicking rocks and sand into the air, gun the vehicle down the driveway. For just an instant he forgot Brown had moved the van and feared their own van had been stolen. Brown lumbered up beside him, panting. Together they watched the van fishtail from the driveway to the sandy road, and disappear towards town.

"I think we have just seen a man profess his guilt," exclaimed Seybold.

"I can't imagine why Samuel would act that way unless he was ~~guilty~~ in on it," suggested Brown. "Come on, we have to tell somebody, fast!"

Brown went back to the small console and dialed 2400. To his surprise Robin Lewster did not answer. He hung up and tried again. Still no answer.

"What do we do now? Lewster isn't answering."

Seybold's legal mind was now in high gear. If he and Brown had been discovered on Portobello, something may have happened on Grand Turk as well. He now thought about the need to preserve the evidence. But he needed instructions. Should he blow his cover as a telephone tech and call the Governor? He decided he had to do so. But if the Governor's phone was tapped at home as well ... he'd have to be careful.

"Here" he said, reaching for the instrument. He dialed 2777.

"Yes, go ahead." It was not the Governor's voice. Had he mis-dialed?

"Aaah yes, this is Reggie Seybold and-."

"Hold on."

Now he could hear voices talking and heard his own name mentioned. Should he hang up?

"Reggie, this is Robin Lewster; is something wrong?"

"Dare we talk on this line?" he asked.

"We have no choice; all hell has broken loose and -."

"Alright, Robin - Robin? Listen carefully." And he reported in detail what they had found on Portobello, and the encounter with Samuel.

"Samuel?" asked Robin. "Samuel who?"

Seybold turned to Brown. "What is Samuel's last name?"

Both Brown and Lewster said the last name in unison in opposite ears.

"Yes, Stubbs" he responded to Lewster.

"What is the number you are using?" he asked. Again Seybold turned to Brown. "I think they want to call us back; our number?"

"It's the tech service line; 5111."

Seybold repeated it into the mouthpiece.

"OK, sit tight. If you have more to do, do it. Then don't move until you hear from me; OK?"

"Right sir." and he hung up.

Lewster turned to Governor Burnside, Jeremy and Livingston, repeating his conversation with Reggie. They had surmised most of it from listening to Robin's side of the conversation.

Burnside spoke first.

"This doubles our problem. Now we have two exchanges to protect and two men to arrest. It also means this Stubbs fellow will within minutes find a telephone and report to Harvey. At that point we have to be concerned about Harvey hiding from us. Any suggestions, Jeremy?"

"The exchange synthesizer. Where is it?"

"In my desk drawer; why?"

"How many numbers related to Harvey do we know? Can we make a list of them quickly? Every number where he might go to hide or where he might be at

9:10
~~9:10 AM~~ on a Sunday morning," checking his watch.

Livingston and Jeremy began the list. The Governor picked up the telephone and called his police department.

"This is the Governor; who is the officer of the day?"

The policeman ~~answering~~ paused just a little too long in answering.

"Hello? This is Governor Burnside; who IS the officer of the day?"

"Yes sir; Lt. Prattle, sir. Do you wish him, sir?"

"Yes, put him on; now."

"Yes sir."

Burnside smiled. Thank God it was Sunday, the first real break of the day. On Sundays the native police officers, those born in the Turks and Caicos, usually took the day off. In their place were the off-islanders, men from Barbados, Jamaica, the eastern Caribbean Islands. None of these men were related to Harvey or Cox or Stubbs.

"Lt. Prattle, sir."

"Prattle, how many men do you have on duty right now?"

"Six, sir."

"And do you have transport?"

"Yes sir!"

"Listen carefully lieutenent. These are my instructions. First take two of your best men and place one at the home of Plentiful; you know the home?"

"Oh, yes sir!"

"Nobody is to go in or out of that home; no-one at all, not even a government minister. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir."

"Take the second man to the Cable and Wireless building. Hold on." Cupping his hand over the telephone he called for Robin to join him. "Tell this policeman exactly where we want a man to stand, inside of the exchange equipment racks. Tell him nothing else."

"Lieutenent?"

"Yes sir!"

"I am placing Robin Lewster on the line. He is going to tell you where I wish a man to be posted at the telephone office. If you don't understand his instructions, tell him so."

"Yes sir!"

Robin took the handset. "Go inside the main equipment building from the front. There are two metal doors painted white marked 'No Admittance'. The man is to go through those doors and stand directly in front of the bays of equipment. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

Robin handed the phone back to the Governor.

"Lieutenent?"

"Yes sir!"

"That man is to stay there on post until I tell you differently. Nobody, not even a telephone company employee, is to enter that room without my permission. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir!"

"Good. Now after you have placed those two men, I want you to come to Waterloo, alone, to see me. As fast as possible, OK?"

"Yes Sir, as fast as possible."

"Lieutenent?"

"Yes Sir!"

"You are not to discuss any of this with anyone. Not even the desk sargeant who answered the telephone; is that clear?"

"Yes Sir!."

The Governor hung up the phone. "Alright, that was luck. Our 'native' police force is on Sunday holiday. Now if we are as lucky on Portobello-."

"We have a list, sir" offered Livingston. "There are 8 numbers here including the two going out of Plentiful's and two at his home.

"Ok, this is a long shot. Robin, will you go with Jeremy to my kitchen where you can hook the synthesizer into the regular house phone? Plug in all 8 numbers and put it on the scan mode. In my desk behind you are a pair of small cassette tape recorders and several rolls of tape. Every phone call you intercept on any of those numbers is to be recorded. Jeremy, I am invoking national security here and Robin I am swearing you to secrecy on everything you hear. Is that understood?"

Lewster was now very impressed with the Governor's take-charge stance. He almost forgave him for the ~~dressing~~ reprimand down he received the day before.

"Yes, sir."

"Good, one more thing. The number where Seybold and Brown are on Portobello?"

"On your note pad, sir; next to the phone."

"Alright, off you two go. Livingston, you and I have work to do."

...

Marvin Cox had been shacked up with a girl friend and did not hear the WIV 7 AM newscast. When Plentiful called Harvey at home to report the newscast she had also tried to call Marvin, but without finding him. After

several trys she abandoned her home and drove quickly to Harvey's house. When she reached Harvey's, he too had tried to find Cox but to no avail. Then he had called Samuel Stubbs on Portobello and directed him to first remove the taps at the exchange, and then get the equipment out of the apartment. More than two hours had now passed; ~~he had~~ no word from Stubbs, and Cox was still not accounted for. Plentiful had consumed two pots of coffee and she now refused to return to her own home.

"Not me child, not me! I not go there."

"You can't stay here" insisted Harvey. "And no-one at your house. Suppose somebody go there?"

"Suppose police go there! Not me, not me child!"

Harvey's phone rang. He didn't move.

"Answer!" screamed Plentiful. "It no bite!"

Reluctantly the Minister slowly reached for the phone. He picked it up but said nothing.

"Harvey? Harvey?"

He still did not answer. Plentiful grabbed the phone from his hand.

...

"Contact!" exclaimed Jeremy. The synthesizer had been active for less than a minute when a sound appeared in the speaker; the ringing of a telephone line. Instantly two sets of numbers appeared on the digital display. One read 2345 and the other read 4380. The ringing sound stopped.

They heard the same voice as Harvey.

"Harvey? Harvey!", and then they heard the silence.

There were some muffled sounds in the background and then a new voice.

"Who that?"

"Plentiful? This Samuel. Harvey there?"

"He here; 'fraid to talk. You tell me."

(Confusing sentence) "No, I talk Harvey. Give him me!" Get him here for you

There were more muffled sounds and Plentiful's voice was now audible more clearly but distant.

"You talk to Samuel, now!" Another pause.

"Job done?" his distinctive voice asked.

"No way'mon; they there waiting on me."

"Who they?"

"Two white guys; one man name Brown, an engineer from London. Other man I don't ~~not~~ know. I see them; they see me. I run ~~away~~ way fast."

"Christ." And he paused to think.

"Where you now?"

"Apartment. I'm scared. Take hours, maybe all day ~~to~~ to move equipment here. I need help. They're looking for me, I know. I need to hide, not move equipment."

"Christ." And he paused to think again.

Jeremy checked the two cassette recorders for the third time. Both had tapes that were moving and with each sound from the speaker the small red LEDs blinked at him. He playfully poked Robin lightly in the ribs and smiled a toothy smile.

"Double Bingo!" he said softly. Robin was smiling just as broadly, and already wondering how to check on the location of 4380 quickly, on a Sunday. He wanted to run and tell the Governor but ~~he didn't want to~~ feared missing a word. Additionally, he now realized his own testimony in a court trial depended upon his actually hearing each word as it was spoken.

"Stay there," commanded Harvey's voice on the phone. "Disconnect equipment

from lines and stay there. Stay off this line; I'll call back."

"Soon?"

"Soon" Harvey reassured.

The line went dead and the synthesizer resumed its scanning of the 8 lines previously entered. Jeremy took a half dozen steps to reach the hallway door of the kitchen.

"Governor, can you hear me, Martin?"

It was a long way to the back den but presently he heard footsteps coming and he returned to the waiting position in front of the synthesizer.

"Yes? Some luck?" It was Livingston. "Martin is on the phone to the Portobello police."

"A wicket on the first swing!" And Jeremy gave a thumbnail sketch of the intercept.

Livingston whistled lowly. "Good show!"

"If I can use the Governor's den phone, I may be able to trace the location of 4380" suggested Robin. "Will you ask him?" ~~Robin~~ HE was not about to leave the kitchen until told to do so.

"Yes, back in a jiffy" and Livingston disappeared down the hallway.

Jeremy had an idea.

"Can we add a 9th number to the scan?" he asked Robin.

"Of course. But wait, you are thinking of 4380?"

"Yes." That was the number where Samuel had been when he called Harvey.

"No such luck; remember, we can do this within an exchange and scan but we can't scan outside of this exchange. Sorry."

Presently Burnside walked briskly into the room. "Some luck, yes?"

Jeremy repeated the intercept and took one of the two recorders to rewind

back to the start of the conversation. The Governor listened intently.

"That's almost good enough" he said scowling. "It would be better if we heard him mention taps or something that really incriminates. OK, I have two policemen heading for the Portobello exchange. One will stay there, one will go to the location where Samuel called from; Robin, do you want to go and use my office phone to check on this?"

"Of course" and he disappeared at a trot leaving the Governor and Jeremy alone. Jeremy spoke.

"Harvey is the problem, yes?"

"Yes, we can't count on Samuel or Cox indicting Harvey although I think they may to save their own skin. It would be best if we can get him to say the right words into that," pointing at the cassette recorder.

"A plan?"

"Perhaps." There was a knock at the doorway and both men turned to see Lt. Prattle. He saluted smartly.

"Come in Lieutenent. Please sit down."

The Lieutenent was accustomed to being around the Governor; he had never been invited to sit down before.

"Yes sir!"

"What is happening is a matter of national security. Do you know what that means?"

Prattle thought for a brief instant. "Yes sir! You in complete charge."

"That's part of it, to be sure. It also means everything that happens is not to be recorded in your notebook, nor spoken about unless I give you the instruction. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir!"

"Good. Now here are my orders to you. Are you comfortable with the two men stationed at Plentiful's house, and Cable and Wireless?"

Prattle knew that if either of his two men screwed up, he personally was now responsible for them. He hesitated.

"No, you are not comfortable?"

"I comfortable but they need more instruction."

The Governor smiled; Prattle was being cautious and wanted to be sure both men were properly ordered. That was good.

"OK, you give them more instruction. Now the hard part. There is a man out there someplace on this island, an employee of Cable and Wireless. I want you to find and arrest him. Do this with as little notice as possible. And then bring him here where he is to be placed in the brig, ahhh holding cell. Do you understand?"

"The cell, here, sir?" Prattle could never remember anyone being detained on the grounds of Waterloo. He believed the old cell was more for its historical purpose than for detention.

"Yes, not at the police station."

"Sir, this man have gun?"

"I doubt it, but you should check yourself out a sidearm just in case."

"This man hurt somebody?" Prattle was now being cautious.

The Governor smiled again. "Not directly, not that we know. He's not wanted for assualt or anything like that, OK?"

"Man's name?"

"Yes, he is Marvin Cox, a technician with telephone. You know him by sight?"

"Yes sir, I know him. He no trouble," meaning Cox's small size was not a

threat to the sizeable Lieutenent.

"We don't know where he is; we hope he is still on island. Now, you will need at least one more man."

"Sir?"

"I want you to station a man at the airport to be sure Cox doesn't try to leave Grand Turk while you are looking for him. Make sure the man you pick understands the seriousness of this investigation."

Prattle now had a problem. He ALSO PLANNED ~~wanted~~ to take a man with him to look for Cox; there were only six on duty including the desk sargeant.

"I need more men, I'm short" he began.

"Humm. No native islanders; do you understand?"

Prattle thought that strange; was the Governor reluctant to bother the favored islander police because it was Sunday?

"Yes, sir."

"One more thing. The man you station at the airport?"

"Yes, sir."

"He needs to be a good man. A top man. If he sees Cox, he is to arrest him, just as you will do if you find him first. And..."

"Yes sir!"

"If Minister Lawrence Harvey shows up at the airport, and he shows any sign of getting onto an airplane, the officer is to arrest him."

"Sir?"

"If Harvey is actually getting onto or into an airplane, arrest him. If he just shows up there, watch him but do not approach him or attempt to do anything. Is that understood?"

"Yes sir!" Prattle's mind was in overload. He had just been given

instructions to arrest a Minister of the Government! This was the most exciting, and challenging operation of his career. He tried to retain his self control but his clenching fists gave him away to the Governor.

"Lieutenent Prattle, this is a top security assignment. I know you will do your best for The Queen. That is all."

Robin Lewster returned to the kitchen just in time to see the police officer ~~bolt~~ spring upright from a sitting position, snap to attention and salute the Governor. Burnside returned the salute.

"Dismissed" was lost in the sudden energizing of the synthesizer and Jeremy's quick moves to restart both tape decks. The last sound Prattle heard as he marched briskly down the hallway was a native man saying, "That you?".

It was the voice of Samuel Stubbs. The Governor glanced at the top panel of the synthesizer and saw two numbers displayed; under 'Calling' read 2345. Under 'Called' it said 4380.

Lewster started to speak. "I have the--."

"Shhh!" came an instant response from Jeremy and Burnside.

"That me. I have plan."

"Yes?"

"You have gas?"

"Gas?"

"For car."

"In van, yes. Not in can."

"Find some, fast. Start a fire."

"Where?"

"Where you are."

"No, no, not good plan."

"You like jail better?"

There was a long pause. Governor Burnside was rubbing his hands together and smiling broadly. Jeremy, Lewster and Livingston were breathless.

"No, no jail."

"Then do it. Do good job, no equipment left; you understand?"

"I understand."

The phone connection went dead. The Governor's kitchen was silent for a full 30 seconds. Finally Burnside spoke.

"Fire, it's the only weapon they know. A time honoured tradition to burn down something they don't want found. Gentlemen, we have Minister Harvey in the vise now."

"Sir?" It was Lewster.

"Yes Robin."

"The location where Samuel is...it's an apartment building. A nine unit apartment building on Leeward Highway, just behind the Catholic church. He's in unit 7, center top floor."

"Jesus Christ". It was Livingston. "Women and children, good God! That could be ugly."

"It could be murder," added Jeremy.

The Governor disappeared at a trot down the hallway to his office.

On his note pad he found the number scribbed by Lewster earlier; the Portobello exchange. He punched in 5111. The phone rang only once.

"Yes?" It was Seybold.

"Governor Burnside here. Have those two policemen arrived yet?"

"Just now walking in the door. You wish to speak-?"

"Put the Lieutenent on please."

Jeremy and Lewster remained with the synthesizer but Livingston followed the Governor to his office. Out in front of Waterloo, ~~Livingston~~ he noticed Mrs. Burnside and the couple's 13 year old son John arriving home from church.

"Lieutenent Lasarde, Sir!"

"Lieutenent, do you have a handheld radio with you?"

"Yes sir!"

"Good. There has been a change in plans. Listen carefully but stop me if I say anything you are not clear about, OK?"

"Yes sir!"

"With all haste you are to proceed to the apartment complex directly behind the Catholic church on Leeward Highway; do you know the one?"

"Yes sir!"

"As soon as we hang up, use your radio to call the fire department. Tell them you have a possible building fire and to meet you at that apartment building. Is that understood?"

"Yes sir!"

"Good. When you arrive, you are to proceed to Apartment 7; it is upstairs, perhaps in the middle. Understood?"

"Yes sir!"

"If the apartment is empty, check it for any sign of fire or gasoline splashed about. I believe someone is preparing to set apartment 7 on fire using gasoline to start the fire. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir, a fire?"

"It may be burning when you get there, it may not. If it is not, we will be very lucky and you are then to make sure there is no gasoline about which could set off by accident. Got that?"

"Yes sir."

"Good, now listen carefully. I believe this apartment is filled with many pieces of...electronics. There may be a man there; you know Samuel Stubbs?"

"Yes, I know him. He work for telephone-."

"That's the man. If you see him anyplace, in the apartment, near the apartment, arrest him and hold him incommunicado...by himself, until you receive further instructions from me. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir; arrest Samuel Stubbs."

"If there is no fire, I want a man stationed to guard the electronics in apartment 7. If there is a fire, the fire department is to get everyone out of the building first; and then protect the electronics next. Is that clear?"

"But water ruin electronics, sir."

"Just don't let it burn up; this is important, OK?"

"Yes sir."

"Any questions?"

"No sir!".

"Let me have the man back; good luck Lieutenent."

Lasarde passed the phone to Reggie and motioned for his companion policeman to follow him at a run out the door.

"Yes sir?"

"Mr. Seybold, I am afraid I must ask you and Mr. Brown to sit tight for

the time being. We have a related emergency back in town. Are you finished with the documentation yet?"

"Just now, sir. Five more minutes at the most."

"Good. I will get you a policeman to guard the facility as quickly as I can; but for now we are fresh out of policemen!"

"I understand sir; good bye."

...

Polly Conner had stayed at church an extra 30 minutes to help the father with plans for January services. ~~It~~ Today had been a good turnout; almost as many as the Christmas service the week before. She was pleased to see all five of the Monastos filling up a row in the middle.

She backed her van from the parking area and made an abrupt turn to the left. She thought she could hear a siren. "A siren on Portobello?" she said aloud. "I must be mistaken!"

No mistake. By the time she had driven the 100 yards ~~from~~ down the church driveway to Leeward highway the sound ~~had become~~ was more distinct and ~~was~~ rapidly becoming louder. She stopped without pulling onto the highway; just in time to spot the island airport's fire truck, loaded with men, come pounding up the hill towards her from the right.

The truck flew past but the brake lights were brightly lit as it quickly decelerated to her left and narrowly missed turning over as it entered the driveway leading to the apartment building 200 feet behind the church.

Polly thought she heard metal screeching on metal as the driver fought to maintain control of the truck. Then, from the opposite direction came one of the brand new police Land Rovers ~~was~~ racing down Leeward Highway with its siren and lights blaring.

"My God!" she exclaimed and instinctively moved her gear shift lever into reverse to back further out of the way. Less than 100 yards away she saw why she thought she heard metal screeching as the fire truck had careened into the driveway. A blueish van, likely a telephone company truck, shot from the driveway with red paint smeared all along its passenger side. Polly closed her eyes in horror. There was a horrendous noise and the spine tingling new screech of metal ramming metal; this time much more distinct.

Shaking all over, tears on her cheeks, she forced her eyes open. There, squarely in the middle of Leeward Highway was the demolished remains of the blue van now firmly married to the front end of the Land Rover. Steam was pouring from the engine compartments of both. The Land Rover had caught the van right at the driver's side door. She knew instantly the van driver had to be dead. She backed her own van up and reparked it in the church lot. Only then did she notice the billowing black smoke pouring from the top floor of the apartment building.

-end-

Chapter 17

Larry Harvey's telephone was ringing. He ignored the dangerous noise. Plentiful could not.

"You get?" she asked. He shook his head.

"I get" and she reached for the handset and placed it to her ear. She heard faint sounds in the earpiece, but no voice.

Finally she spoke. "Who there?"

"Plentiful?"

"That me" she responded, the voice familiar. "That you Marvin?"

"Why policeman at your house?" the voice demanded. "I just go there; policeman standing door. You know why?"

Plentiful's fears were now fulfilled. The police were at her home.

"Where you Marvin?"

"Majorie house. I be here all night. I go your house and see policeman. Come back. Why he be there?"

"Big problems. Just minute" and she held the phone against her ample busom.

"Marvin say policeman my house. He with Marjorie. He come here?"

Harvey stared at her as if in a trance. His entire world was falling down all around his head. And he was not prepared. He said nothing.

"Harvey, talk me!" she began. "Cox say policeman-."

"I hear. Give me phone."

She slid the phone across her dress into the waiting hand of Harvey. He took a deep breath.

"Maybe Policeman just walking by house?" he began. "How you know he really there?"

"He there, not walking. He standing guard at door. He Monserrat, not local."

"You have money?" Harvey asked.

"Money? Money? How much money?"

"Money fly to DR or states. You have?"

Cox was deeply confused. Instinctively he knew there should not be a policeman standing guard at Plentiful's door. He also knew their extra activity was dangerous. But the money had been good.

"Some money, maybe two thousand."

"Cash?"

"Yes, hidden home."

Harvey's mind was now on escape. If Samuel had been caught at the exchange and the apartment in Portobello was now burning, there was just enough time to gather up a few belongings and leave the country. His mind told him the next international flight was 4 PM; he glanced at his watch. It was now 10:40. 'I not hide that long' he said to himself. 'This small island.' And there was the practical problem of getting himself on board the Pan Am jet if the airport was being watched.

"Get money, quick; meet me headquarters."

"Headquarters? You mean GDP office?"

"Yes; how long you be?"

"Half hour most. What happening; we get caught?"

"Yes, we get caught. Take back salina streets, watch for more police. They may be reaching you."

"I be careful." And the phone reverted to a dial tone.

...

When the intercept had begun Jeremy started both cassette tape machines again. Livingston and Robin were with him; Governor Burnside was in a front sitting room talking with Minday and his son. Livingston had run to alert Burnside. All four had listened carefully to the last part of the conversation.

Jeremy switched off the recorders and spoke first.

"Pick him up?" He was looking at the Governor.

Burnside was considering the options open to Harvey. There was the late afternoon Pan Am flight but he had that covered. There were other flights to the DR or a charter to who-knew-where. But there was only one airport and, hopefully, he had that covered. 'Maybe not quite' he thought to himself. And there were boats. It was a 45 minute run to South Caicos by fast boat and if a plane was to pick him up there...

"Martin, Martin, your office telephone is ringing!" Mindy Burnside had been left in the den to report any calls there. The Governor headed for the den with Livingston on his heels.

A little out of breath he reached for the handset.

"Yes, Governor Burnside here."

The voice on the telephone was speaking very rapid pidgeon English. He caught two words; 'fire' and 'dead'.

"Hold on!" he commanded, and took a deep breath for his own equilibrium. "Now, start again and speak slowly."

"Lieutenent LaSarde, Portobello, sir! Big problems. We reach apartment, it on fire. We have accident with Rover at apartment, man dead."

"A man is dead? A police officer? Who-?"

"No, not officer. We think Samuel Stubbs. He driving telephone truck,

ram our Rover at driveway to apartment. Men fighting fire now. Big fire-."

"Lieutenent, hold on." Turning to Livingston, "Go in the kitchen and replace Jeremy; send him here!". Livingston, now sweating intensively, began a trot for the hallway. The Governor noticed Mindy was standing with her hands clasped before her chest in a prayful stance. He smiled at her and winked, returning to the telephone.

"Lieutenent, call out all of the men you can locate. I want the entire area shut off; nobody is to get near the crashed vehicles or the apartment. Is that understood?"

"Yes sir!"

"I am going to send the Attorney General to Portobello as fast as we can get our airplane running. When he arrives, you are to take his instructions; do you understand?"

There was a slight hesitation and then "Yes, sir."

"Now, do you have a doctor at the scene?"

"He on way, sir."

"The apartment; are there people inside?"

"We not know, but firemen making check now."

"Lieutenent, two more things. If Samuel Stubbs is not dead, I want everything done to keep him alive. The best medical care, do you understand?"

"Yes sir!"

"Right, now just in case we do have people inside the apartment, find more doctors. I want every available doctor on the island there. Is that understood?"

"Yes sir!"

"Is there anything else?"

"Yes sir. I hurt in crash. Officer Jones hurt too."

Jeremy was just entering the doorway and Burnside motioned him to his side.

"You are hurt? How badly?"

"My arm, sir. Maybe broken. Officer Jones have bad cut on head but he still working-."

"Can you still function, are you going to be able to carry out my orders without help?"

"I OK for little while" the officer responded bravely. Burnside took a new deep breath.

"Bless you Lasarde; there will be a commendation in this for you, and Jones as well. Carry on."

"Yes sir!"

Burnside set the telephone down and ~~noticed~~ saw he was soaking wet. Mindy noticed as well and ran to the bathroom for a wet towel.

"Someone has been killed? The building is on fire?" surmised Jeremy from the snatches of conversation he had heard and the kitchen briefing he received from Livingston.

"Yes, but hold on." He reached for the telephone again and punched in a local number.

"Jackson here" he heard the voice answer.

"Jack, no time for explanations. I ~~need~~ want you at the airport as fast as possible. McTabbish needs to be on Portobello right now!"

Andrew Jackson, a British government pilot assigned to the Turks and Caicos, spent most of his days as the 'one-man-airforce' for the islands.

Usually with a police officer trainee on board, he patroled the waters of the archipeligo watching for boats that originated in Haiti or the Dominican Republic to the south. As often as not, they were carrying illegal drugs or would-be smuggled immigrants to the islands.

"15 minutes sir."

"Good. Fill up with fuel, you may be doing a quick turn around."

"Very good, sir."

Burnside slowly placed the instrument in its cradle, turned to face Jeremy and leaned backwards against his desk. Mindy reappeared carrying a wet towel. As soon as she saw her husband's face, she knew his blood pressure was dangerously high. Jeremy did as well.

"Martin, you sit down; right now!" she instructed. The Governor knew she was right; 'sit down or fall down' he thought to himself. Jeremy assisted him on one side, Mindy on the other to his chair.

"This is a hell of a way to go out" he joked. Mindy began mopping his face with the towel. Jeremy thought better of asking questions.

"Being Governor is one thing" Martin began, "but being field commander in a war, well, I have a new admiration for ~~those men."~~ LORD MOUNTBATTEN."

He took several deep breaths.

"Jeremy, in less than 15 minutes Jackson will be ready at the airport to fly you to Portobello. Here's the situation there", and he began a summary.

...

Polly's fright turned to panic when she realized the fire in the apartment building directly behind the church was rapidly spreading throughout the building. The French language Catholic service had stopped when the fire siren drowned out the father's voice; several dozen Haitians

spilled from the building to see what was happening.

Now Polly was leaving her van to run behind the church for a better view of the apartment. She could see perhaps six fire fighters wrestling with hoses plus two more racing up stairs at opposite ends of the building. One man began knocking on doors on the second floor, screaming at people to vacate the building. The other man tried to open the door to the center apartment where the smoke seemed to be concentrated. When it would not open he tried kicking it in with his foot.

'Water' she thought to herself. 'They are going to need water!' She pulled off her heels and ran barefooted on the rocky ground towards the fire truck. By now the hose was being reeled away from the truck and the pumper engine was started.

"There is water over here" she was screaming, approaching the truck. "Over here, at the church, we have water!"

People, mostly women and children, were now scurrying from the apartment doorways and there was a crush at both end stairways; residents trying to get away, firemen trying to get upstairs. No-one seemed to hear her!

"Water, when you run out of water, the church has water in the cistern!" she screamed at a man grappling with valves on the fire truck. The fireman's face was set in grim determination as he strained to rotate a valve handle that seemed to be stuck. When it suddenly freed and the water began to flow he turned to Polly with a curt "Thank you, mam. Now you get out of the way, Mrs. Conner. Plenty danger here!"

The yard was filled with screaming people and crying children. The single fire hose was finally pointing a steady but slow stream of water from the ground towards the second floor. Unfortunately the water was splattering on

the outside of the burning apartment. Two firemen were beating on the door with axes behind a cloud of ricochetting water spray.

'If they can just get the door open and the water inside' Polly thought to her self. She felt a tug on her arm.

"Father" she said looking down at the priest draped in his robe and carrying a bible. "This is awful - there may be people trapped..." and then she remembered the grinding accident on the roadway in front. She turned to look and saw the highway was now blocked with cars from both directions. In the middle, the still steaming remains of the police cruiser and the blue van.

"Father, father come with me. There may be people hurt in the accident!", pointing towards the highway. Rocks stabbing her feet, grasping her heels in her left hand, she extended a helping right hand to the aging priest as they made their way through the gathering crowd to the roadway.

A single policeman supporting himself against his own demolished vehicle was at the scene. Blood covered his face and soaked the white jacket he wore. Three natives were peering into the badly demolished blue van through what was left of the driver's side door.

The policeman recognized Polly.

He took his left arm and wiped blood from his lips on the sleeve to clear his mouth. "Mrs. Conner" he started "not good, you not look."

"Is someone - can we help?" she asked, stopping short with her way blocked by the natives peering into the crumpled van.

"No help, man dead."

Polly's hand went to her throat, and then moved to her mouth. She said nothing. The priest now took her arm and gently pulled Polly away from the

scene.

She walked a few steps and stopped.

"Last rites?" she said softly.

The priest, tears in his eyes, looked first at Polly and then at the van. "Yes my child; now you go to the church and sit down."

...

Jeremy McTabbish had just left Waterloo for the airport. Mindy Burnside stood behind Martin's chair patting his forehead and face with a freshly soaked towel. The Governor had his yellow legal pad on his lap and was beginning on a new sheet.

"Will you ask Livingston to come here? And ask John to sit with Robin Lewster in case a new intercept occurs. If it does, John is to run and tell us right away."

Mindy Burnside was nearly twenty years junior to her husband. She, even more than Martin, was longing for their retirement days just ahead. Martin's health was of far greater concern to her than his civil service status at retirement. She so wanted to tell him to 'back off', and 'let it go' but she knew that would only anger him more, and increase his already dangerously high blood pressure.

"Yes dear" and she bent over to kiss him softly on the forehead. He stopped writing long enough to twist his neck upward and smile at her.

"Thank you", and he winked his private wink into her eyes.

'This is dangerously close to being out of hand' he thought to himself. He closed his eyes and laid his head on the chairback.

"Governor? Governor, are you alright?"

He reopened his eyes; Livingston was standing before his desk.

"Yes, but I'm afraid my blood pressure is up. Do you remember that options paper I asked you to prepare yesterday?"

"Yes, I have it here in my briefcase" pointing to a case on the floor. "Shall I get it for you-?"

The Governor laughed. "Oh my no; as clever as you are Mr. Thatcher, I really doubt your options could have foreseen the events of today."

Livingston laughed back. "Of course, sir. I guess, actually, they are quite superfulous now."

"Yes, well, they will make good memoirs for you, won't they?"

Livingston nodded his head in ascent and waited for the Governor to speak again. Burnside turned back to his still nearly blank legal pad sheet.

"Jeremy is on his way to Portobello. Will you please get me the duty officer at ~~the~~ our airport on the phone?"

Livingston dialed the number.

"This is Livingston Thatcher and I am calling for Governor Burnside. Please find me the police duty officer right away." He paused. "They are looking for him now, sir."

"For now, Portobello is mainly a mop up operation" began Burnside. "I hope we have no more excitement there for awhile. But we still have-"

"Yes, hold on for Governor Burnside." Livingston handed over the phone.

"Who is this?"

"Corporal Pratt, sir!"

"Corporal, are you the only police officer at the airport at this time?"

"No sir, Lieutenent Prattle assign Corporal McVey."

"Do you see McVey?"

"Yes sir, he by front door."

"Please get him for me."

Cupping his hand over the telephone microphone, he spoke again to Livingston.

"-we still have two loose cannon on our island. We need to pick up Cox and Harvey as well. But I worry Harvey-"

"Corporal McVey, Sir!"

"Corporal, listen carefully. I am countermanding the orders given you by Lieutenent Prattle. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir!"

"The A G -ahh, Attorney General McTabbish should be at the airport. He is preparing to fly out with Andrew Jackson in our airplane. Have you see them?"

"Jackson, sir. Not attorney general, yet."

"When he arrives, report to him. He has my orders for you, do you understand; do exactly what he tells you."

"Yes sir!"

"Good, now let me talk with Corporal Pratt again." There was a brief pause.

"Pratt, sir!"

"Corporal, listen carefully. If either Minister Harvey or Marvin Cox who works for the telephone company appear at the airport, you are to call me here ...at 2777...immediately. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir, 2777."

"Do you know these men by sight?"

"Yes sir, Cox my cousin and everyone know Harvey."

The Governor sighed and flinched.

"Corporal, for the next few hours I want you to forget Cox is your cousin. If either of these men show up at the airport and you don't call me, I will hold you personally responsible. Is that clear?"

"Personally responsible; yes sir!"

"Repeat my telephone number back to me."

"2777, sir!"

"Very good. That is all, corporal."

Burnside set the phone down and unconsciously snapped a pencil in half in his right hand.

"Problem, sir?" asked Livingston.

"His bloody cousin! It's a wonder we ever catch anyone after a crime in this damn place; everyone is everybody's cousin!"

"Or lover" added Livingston.

"Yes, quite. Well, as I was saying we still have Harvey and Cox loose on this island. I have tried to place myself in Harvey's shoes. I think he is preparing to run, probably with Cox. From our intercept we know they are gathering money. We've possibly missed them at the GDP building by now, what with all of the excitement at Portobello."

"Sir?"

"Yes."

"I took the liberty of adding a 9th number to the scanner. The GDP office telephone is now being monitored."

The Governor was pleasantly surprised. "Excellent Mr. Thatcher." And he was concerned this had slipped by him. 'I am really feeling this' he thought to himself.

"I think Harvey may try to get to South Caicos by fast boat. He

is bright enough to expect the airport here to be watched. And short of grabbing a charter out of here, he is unlikely to feel comfortable waiting for the 4 PM Pan Am flight. Out of South he could arrange a charter to who knows where. I-"

"Father, father, we have a contact." It was son John.

"If you will, sir, allow me to handle it. Please rest here."

The Governor started to move and felt light headed. "Alright then, but please send Mindy to me."

John and Livingston went quickly to the hallway. "John, get your mother for the Governor."

There were already voices in the speaker when Livingston entered the doorway.

"-me South one hour."

"South? Why?"

"Just do it."

"Where we go?"

"Tell you there. Have plenty of fuel?"

"Maybe three hours fuel. Need more?"

"Yes, more. Fill up. Tell no-one, understand?"

"Big secret?"

"Big secret, you owe me, yes?"

"I owe you. One hour."

The line went dead. Livingston was rubbing his wet hands together.

"The boss called it; that was Harvey arranging a charter at South Caicos, yes?"

Robin turned to him. "Yes, and here is the number he called. I think it

is Grey Hills Aviation on Portobello", handing over a scrap of paper.

"He was calling from the GDP office?" he mused noticing the two numbers on the paper.

"That's right; it's a good thing we added that number-."

Livingston called for John and the boy appeared.

"You are on duty again; I need to report to your father" and he was again down the hallway.

...

There was a soft knock on the door behind Harvey. He turned and knocked twice back.

"It me, open door." Plentiful pushed her sizeable body through the cracked door opening.

"Boat be ready ten minutes. Plane ready?"

"Yes, one hour he meet us. You get money?"

"My sister have $500; I have."

"Put it here" pointing at a pile on the GDP table. Plentiful did not respond.

"Here, I count!" Harvey insisted.

Marvin Cox sat in a darkened corner, his heads in his hands. He had not uttered a word for 15 minutes. Harvey began to count, softly but aloud.

"1,000...1,500...2,000...3,000...4,000...5,000-."

"I not go". It was Cox.

Harvey stopped counting and wrote '5000' on a piece of paper.

"Why not go? You fool!"

"No, you fool. You run, never come back. This your country, you not run from country."

"We go jail here. You too. We all go jail. We better hide Haiti. Then few week, we come back."

"Not come back. British be mad, CM be mad. Everybody be mad. We not come back" and Cox pressed his face into his hands above his chest.

Harvey turned back to the pile of money and read from the number he had written down.

"5,000 ... 6,000 ... 6,500 ... we have six thousand five hundred dollars. We stay long time Haiti with that!"

Plentiful was reaching for the pile of U.S. hundred dollar bills; Harvey cut her off, slamming his palm on the pile.

"No, I carry. We go now, hurry. Boat waiting!"

Marvin Cox did not move. Plentiful had the door open and was walking to the battered Ford station wagon parked outside. Harvey tried one more time.

"Marvin, you stay, you be jail by dark. You come, you be drinkin' rum and coke tonight."

Harvey stood in the doorway; the Ford motor started behind him. Plentiful was waving at him to hurry.

Cox did not move. Harvey raised the paper bag of money in salute.

"Thank you for money" and the door closed leaving Cox sitting alone as the station wagon pulled away.

...

Thatcher had just completed relating the intercept to the Governor.

"South Caicos as I thought?"

"Yes, and it was the GDP office telephone they used-."

"Yes, yes. Well, our plane is on the way to Portobello. By the time we turn it around, it may be too late to catch them on South. And I need Jeremy

on Portobello to clean up the mess. We do have one man on South Caicos."

"Sir, who?

"Oh yes, you wouldn't know. I dispatched Corporal McVey with Jeremy in our plane. He is being dropped off in South to watch the airport. If he sees Harvey or Cox, he is to phone us here. Unfortunately, he is not armed and I think him too inexperienced to make the arrest."

"Sir?" began Thatcher again "there is no longer any mystery as to whether or not Harvey will be there; we have the intercept. He could already be heading there in a boat. They said one hour; that's 50 minutes from now!"

Minday appeared at the doorway. "Martin, there is a police officer here to see you. He says it is urgent."

"Send him in."

Lieutenent Prattle appeared in the doorway.

"Sir!"

"Yes Lieutenent, what is it?"

"Sir, man report me Harvey and Plentiful at South Dock getting on fast boat."

"How long ago?"

Prattle looked at his most prized possession, a Casio dive watch. He was not a diver, but here on Grand Turk everyone pretended they were.

"Five minutes, more."

"Any sign of Mr. Cox, Lieutenent?"

"No sir."

"Lieutenent, is the police launch operational?"

"Sir?"

"The police launch, is it running?"

"No sir, think propellar bent."

"Bad luck; OK, stand outside and I will call you."

The Governor scribbed a few words on his legal pad, and checking his watch, jotted down the time; '11:20 AM'.

"Livingston, we are very thin. I am going to be frank with you; I think my pressure is too high for me to race to South to arrest Harvey. I am going to empower you to do this and you will take Prattle with you. OK?"

Livingston Thatcher, late of the British Consulate in Detroit, where his most exciting day was a two martini lunch with an American car parts supplier, was sweating profusely. Far more than the modest December heat would normally cause.

"I can do it sir, but I don't mind telling you I am nervous."

The Governor looked at him closely. 'Yes, you are nervous; the shirt is stained, your face is beaded and hands are dripping wet. But then I have a boiling set of veins and arteries; if I stand up, I may fall down.'

"Lieutenent Prattle?" There was no response.

"Livingston-."

"Yes sir, I'll get him."

...

Polly Conner worked her way through the long line of cars stopped along the highway. A fresh contingent of police officers had arrived and was trying to clear the crowd away from the fire scene as well as the accident. Polly's van was the first to move past the stranded van and cruiser after the police opened up one lane to traffic.

The fire department was now pumping water from the church cistern and it looked as if they had the fire stopped. Polly guessed two, perhaps three

of the apartments were gutted; all on the top floor. Mentally she made a note to herself to have the cable TV crew check their wires there; some were certainly damaged in the fire.

Free of the jam, she checked her watch. It was now past 11:45 and she was not of a mind to stop at the agency office as she had planned. She would drive straight home and deal with her departing guests.

...

"Sir!" It was Prattle with Livingston close by.

"Lieutenent, I am sending you with the Chief Secretary to South Caicos. Thanks to your excellent police work, we believe Mr. Harvey and Plentiful will be trying to meet a chartered plane there. I want them both arrested at the airport and held until we can arrange transportation. Hold them at the airport, not in Cockburn Harbour. Is that clear?"

"Sir? Plentiful?"

"Yes, both of them. You will do exactly as Mr. Thatcher asks, just as if you were responding to my requests. Is that understood?"

"Yes sir!"

Livingston spoke.

"Sir, transportation?"

"Yes, that's next. Lieutenent, wait outside again and Mr. Thatcher will join you presently."

"Sir!" and he saluted smartly. The Governor waved him off but did not salute.

"Livingston, we are out of airplanes. Please get on the telephone and see if TCNA has a flight ready to take off in the next 15 minutes."

"To South Caicos, sir?"

"No damn it, to anyplace. If they do, I'll speak with them. If they don't, well, I'll still speak with them!"

The Governbor's face was now quite red. Livingston wished Mindy would come back into the room. The last thing they needed right now was the Governor collapsing.

...

Marvin Cox sat alone in the GDP building for nearly 30 minutes. Then he stood and went into the bathroom. Flipping on the light, he stared at his face in the mirror.

"You big trouble" he muttered. "Now you alone. Stupid man."

He shut off the light, fumbled in the dark for his GDP building keys and stepped out into the bright sunlight. Out of habit he locked the door behind and began walking. He turned north and walked slowly at first. Several cars driving by honked and people waved to him. He did not wave back.

One car drove up beside and slowed down. A man's voice interrupted his thoughts.

"Want ride?"

Marvin stopped and looked at the voice. It was Jack the taxi driver. Jack was his friend and right now Marvin needed a friend.

"You busy?" he asked Jack.

"No, have time. Get in. Where to?"

"We just drive?"

"Sure, nothing happen' here. We drive."

And Jack's van continued north, away from the airport.

...

"TCNA says they have no plane capable of going anyplace right now.

The next plane available is due in from Salt Cay in 30 minutes."

"Let me have the phone; who is this?"

"I have James Plasset, the ground manager-."

"Plasset, Governor Burnside here. Are you sure there are no flyable planes on the ground at the present time?"

"No sir, none at all. This is our maintenance day and -."

"Not even a small single engined?"

"Nothing sir, nothing at all."

"Bugger. OK, do what you can to rush the plane back from Salt Cay. Plasset, this is a matter of national security. I need a plane to fly two men to South Caicos right now. Do you understand the importance of this?"

"I understand but I can only do what I can do-."

"Hang it; the Chief Secretary is on his way to you with a policeman. See that they get to South Caicos as fast as possible."

"I'll do my best sir."

The Governor tossed the phone to the cradle. "I knew selling the national airline out to private interests was a mistake. Damn those Texans; what a miserable way to run an airline!"

Mindy had returned to the room with freshly wet towels but stood back while her husband was screaming into the telephone. She also had a glass of water in one hand.

"Martin, take these two pills and then take a deep breath. Frankly my dear, you look very bad."

He took the pills and the water and swallowed them down. Setting the water down, he took her hand. She was already mopping his wet brow.

Livingston stood silently and then took the initiative.

"Sir, I propose to leave now."

"Yes, of course. You know what needs to be done; good luck to you."

"Yes sir, you can count on me. Now you rest and ...." he could think of nothing else to say. Mindy managed a wave to him behind her back. Livingston was off, collecting the Lieutenent along the way.

-end-

Chapter 18

"Good morning. It is 7 AM in the Turks and Caicos Islands. This is Robert Manchester with the Monday news.

"Portobello's police department is blaming faulty wiring for a Sunday morning fire which destroyed three apartments in a nine unit complex directly behind the catholic church, off Leeward Highway. No one was injured inside of the apartment group but two firemen suffered minor burn and abrasion injuries battling the stubborn blaze.

"In a related story, Cable and Wireless technician Samuel Stubbs died in a two car traffic accident directly in front of the blazing apartment at about the time the blaze was discovered. Witnesses say Stubbs was driving away from the fire when his van plowed into the arriving fire truck, careened off of the fire truck and then struck a police cruiser also arriving on the scene. Stubbs was pronounced dead at the scene of the crash.

"It is theorized Stubbs was working on telephone equipment stored in the building's top floor when the fire began. It is believed he was racing for help when the accident occured. Manager Robin Lewster for Cable and Wireless says Stubbs was a top employee and his bravery will not be forgotten.

"A policeman, Corporal McVey headquartered in Grand Turk, was injured in an altercation on South Caicos about noon Sunday. McVey apparently was attempting to apprehend one or more men who were believed to be working on an aircraft at the South Caicos airport when he was struck down. The air traffic control officer on South Caicos witnessed the incident from his tower location and reports the plane and its occupants then flew off leaving McVey on the ground. Police are withholding details of the incident and the identification of the airplane pending a review by the Governor's office.

Mcvey was taken to Grand Turk hospital where he is listed in good condition.

"More news after this message from BWI Trading, limited."

Mindy Burnside watched the expressions of her husband's face as both listened to the first morning news. Sunday had not ended well for the Governor. Minister Harvey had escaped, Marvin Cox was still not accounted for, and the skeletal staff of his official British contingent had been scattered over several islands. ~~She~~ Mindy had insisted he go to bed around 4 Sunday afternoon, just minutes after Robin Lewster told Martin someone named Seybold was not a telephone technician, but a Cable and Wireless attorney in disguise. She could not remember the last time her husband totally lost control as he did with Lewster. Now he was sitting up in bed with a tray on his lap, sipping tea and occasionally taking a bite of unbuttered toast. They had exchanged only a few words when she awoke to find him fiddling with the radio at 6:45 AM.

"Chief Minister Orville Smythe's office advises WIV there will be a public news conference at 12 noon today on Grand Turk. Smythe, late on Saturday, said he would reveal details charging Cable and Wireless with tapping his telephones this morning. WIV expects to have a full report on our 1 PM news this afternoon.

"In the weather today-." Mindy reached for the volume control and turned down the radio.

"I think we know about the weather" she smiled. It was bright and sunny outside.

"I wonder what it might be in the south of England today?" The Governor was now smiling at her. She winked back. They planned to retire to the south of England. The weather there was their private joke.

Jeremy McTabbish also switched off his radio when the weather forecast appeared. He had arrived back on Grand Turk at dusk after orchestrating the official investigation of the incidents on Portobello. His decision to deactivate but not take out the Portobello exchange taps followed a discussion with the Governor shortly after 2 PM Sunday. Brown and Seybold had accomplished this before they too returned to the capital island. Jeremy had gone directly to Waterloo upon his return, where he learned the Governor had been placed in bed under sedative several hours before. AT 9AM This morning he would meet with the CM ~~at 9 AM~~ at Cable and Wireless; an invitation the CM had to be badgered to accept. ~~Prior to the~~ Earlier, CM, he ~~was going~~ planned to meet with Lewster and his British visitor crew at 8:30. In Jeremy's possession were copies of the audio tapes made during the previous day's intercepts. He hoped to convince the CM that Cable and Wireless had nothing to do with phone tapping, but he was reluctant to explain his own use of the synthesizer to make his point. ~~Reluctantly,~~ REGRETABLY, the self incriminating tapes of Harvey were a ~~fall back~~ last resort, all-else-has-failed tool. He was now reviewing his ammunition on a legal pad.

necessary?

'#1-Statements of Brown, Seybold

A-Documentation Grand Turk, Portobello exchanges

1-List of phones tapped, names of those tapped

Note: Make point no CM phones tapped; Governor tapped!

'#2-History of taps (Lewster)

A-First taps Dec.XX (Grand Turk)

B-Dec. 28 discovery Portobello

1-(Brown/Seybold) Discovery by Samuel Stubbs

2-Fire Portobello; Stubbs death

3-(myself) Equipment found, burned apartment

'#3-Equipment located/Plentiful's house

A-Missing Marvin Cox'

Jeremy's plan was to not mention Harvey in the meeting. He wanted to plant the suggestion that Cox and Stubbs worked together on the operation with Plentiful as an agent on Grand Turk. He would admit they had no clue as to the agent on Portobello.

With the meeting being held at the Cable and Wireless office, he planned for Brown to demonstrate what a tap looked like and describe how the system worked. At this point he was going to offer the CM a tour of the companion equipment found and now under guard at Plentiful's. He would mention that Plentiful was also not accounted for.

No mention would be made of Plentiful and Harvey's apparent escape by chartered plane. An early morning telephone message from Lieutenent LaSarde told him the Portobello based charter pilot had admitted flying the two as far as Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Jeremy was packing papers in his briefcase when there was a soft knock at the rear door. He glanced at his watch; 7:50 AM. Alone in the house he walked to open the door.

"Good morning Jack" he said to the smiling cab driver. "Come in, I have a few minutes."

"Mornin' sir. We talk?"

"I'm in a bit of a rush, but yes, please."

Jack stood by the doorway, keeping his options open. "You look for man?" he asked.

"What man?"

"Telephone man, Marvin Cox?"

McTabbish saw a light at the end of the tunnel. "Please sit down Jack; yes, we are looking for Cox."

"He in big trouble, yes?"

"Well, I don't know how big yet. We do wish to question him."

"About funny business at telephone company?"

"That's right. Do you know where Cox is hiding?"

Jack smiled, stood up and moved back to the door. "I not involved in this funny business; you understand?"

For everything Jack was known to be, a liar did not make the list. "Yes, I understand."

"You know Harvey and Plentiful run to Haiti?"

"I know."

"You know Cox and Stubbs do this work for Harvey?"

"Yes, and Stubbs is dead."

"You know there 21 taps here Grand Turk?"

"21? I know 19."

"Cox say 21. OK, if I take you to him, how he be treated?"

"Jack, we need someone to collaborate our evidence. We need a person from the inside of this operation to tell us what they did. That will assist us to build a case against Harvey."

"You say Marvin be this person to help you?"

"Perhaps."

Jack looked intently at the AG. Jack's position in the community depended upon his being a free agent, not being tied to any side or persausion. He felt was dangerously close to that edge, ~~he felt~~.

"OK, you come with me. I take you to Cox."

Jeremy was now worried about the time. His watch said 8 AM; he had planned a brief stop at his office before the 8:30 meeting at the telephone company. This was more important...

"Let's go" and he lifted his brief case and followed Jack out the door.

Jack's van was parked under Casaurina pine trees at the end of Jeremy's driveway. Jack backed into the driveway so they approached the van from the rear.

"Wait" Jack requested as Jeremy walked past the back of the van for the side door. He stopped ~~walking~~ and Jack opened the rear doors to the van. A black man was laying beneath the seat.

"This Cox" he announced. The man crammed under the seat was nervously shaking ~~with fright~~. (Shiney w/ sweat?)

...

Paul Monasto stood at the door to the Harvey wood working shop in Portobello's airport commercial area. The shop appeared to be empty.

"Hello, anyone here?" he called. There was no response.

He tried again and now heard the shuffling noise of wood against wood from inside the building. He entered.

In a far corner he could make out two dark forms moving plywood sheets from a pile to a pick-up truck. He ~~looked around as he walked~~ survey~~ing~~ed the equipment, no he wrecked, new and old spread throughout the one-time hanger. A small office area, open to the work floor, was ~~dark~~ unlit. The men took no notice of him and continued the methodical shifting of plywood sheets from stack to truck.

"I am Paul Monasto; is Gonzalez here?" Paul was looking for the shop manager and now stood at the side of the pickup they were filling. Neither

man said a word nor changed the pace ~~of plywood loading~~.

"Gonzalez?" Paul repeated.

One man raised his hand as a signal to the other to stop.

"No Gonzalez" he said.

Paul decided the men were Haitian. And he tried to remember his high school French.

He stammered 'Ou est Gonzalez?"

Both men laughed aloud. One smiled and said in almost perfect English "Gonzalez gone, maybe Dominican Republic."

Paul was baffled. 'Of course; this is still the Christmas vacation week.' He started again. "When will Gonzalez come back; this week?"

The Haitian was now growing irritated at the questions.

"Why you want to know? Who are you?"

"I have been hired by - to come here to work, to build cabinets. I was supposed to report to Gonzalez this morning."

The man relaxed a little. "I see; Gonzalez leave this morning. I think he not come back. His boss gone too."

'His boss?' thought Paul; 'Harvey'? But he dared not mention Harvey's name. "Thank you; I'll come back,ahhh - later." And he turned to walk back to his car. Now what would he tell Karen? Should he go to see Avery?

...

Avery Burgess had left his compound at 7 AM to inspect work at the shopping center. The streets were buzzing with talk of the fire, the death of Stubbs, and something new else. A native had said to him shortly after he climbed from his pickup truck "Harvey run away to Haiti; he steal telephones." It was an amazing thing about Turks and Caicos culture; Cable

sentence needs more to be "Amazing"

and Wireless telephones had provided a new tool to the pre-telephone efficient system for relaying news. Avery knew there was usually about a 70% truth factor in any such story he heard. The mistake in this story? Harvey was not stealing telephones; he was stealing messages from telephones. A fine point perhaps to his fellow natives; an important point to Avery.

'They already know' he thought to himself. 'That means the Chief Minister also knows. I wonder how he will handle this in his news conference at noon? Will he admit or implicate his own Minister?'

...

Polly Conner awoke just after 8. She could think of no reason to leave the bed. As best she could recall, the night before had gone badly. The image of the burning building, the screaming children and the smashed cars kept playing through her mind. She ~~could recall~~ recounted that her meeting with Karen had been good and for an hour it had taken her consciousness away from the events that preceded. But that was yesterday; now her head and body ached, and she was fully dressed in her own bed. How in the world did that happen?

Slowly it was coming back. Young Shawn had disappeared to the beach during her meeting with Karen; his clothing and two bags already moved to Polly's in-house guest room, the 'water-bed room' as she called it.

Karen had left after agreeing she would begin work for Polly January 6th. 'Then I thought of joining Shawn on the beach but my head ached and I felt it might be better if I started the intimate dinner for two. Along the way I found an open bottle of white wine; damn it! I remember almost nothing after that.'

Shawn remembered. He found 'Aunt Polly' quite inebriated and strangely playful when he returned to the house around 6. When she rubbed against his

Salty, TORSO
~~ocean~~ wet ~~body~~ he was at first startled and then frightened by his own body responses. He had promptly excused himself when he felt his swimsuit bulge, and gone to his room to shower and organize racing thoughts. When he finally reappeared Polly had the dinner ready to serve.

Unfortunately, she now had a second bottle of wine open and before they reached desert, his companion could barely pick up her fork.

Shawn then virtually carried her to bed where she seemed to make a miraculous recovery. Insisting he sit down on the bed with her to watch a videotape, he discovered she had an unexpected appetite for triple X rated Greek films. For the first five minutes he dared not look at her, his eyes transfixed on the screen. When he finally stole a sidelong glance, she was passed out fully clothed, wrapped in a blue silken sheet. He shut the video off, dimmed the lights and stole back to his waterbed; where he had a wet and fitful night.

With throbbing head she pulled herself from the bed and started for the bathroom. If she couldn't recall what she and Shawn did do, she knew instinctively what they did not do. Standing, trying to improve her equilibrium, there was a knock at the door.

'Who could that be?' she wondered. 'I am not presentable!'

"Yes, who is it?"

"Au- Polly? It's Shawn. Are you alright?"

"Oh, Shawn." She broke into a painful smile. "Yes, I'm mostly alright. But I'm having trouble standing up. The wine I guess."

The door opened, he took a hesitant step inside wearing only a SKIN-CLAD pair of ~~jockey shorts~~ SWIM SHORTS. Polly's heart rose to her throat and she glanced quickly at herself in the mirror. 'Just awful!' she thought.

use that phrase a lot.

"Can I help you? I mean, if you are having trouble standing up-."

"Why of course you can, what a chivalrous thing to offer. Here, let me lean on your strong shoulders," taking his arm. With the first few escorted steps her aches and pains melted away.

"I'm afraid I look as terrible as I feel," she began. They were approaching the bathroom.

"Do you want me to leave you here?" ~~he asked~~. The tone in his voice told her everything; he had no desire to leave. She stopped them at the door and moved her hand and arm from around his supporting shoulder to his chest. Laying her head against him and stroking the young growth of hair, she answered.

(where? on chest, his head)

"Had a shower yet?"

Polly could hear Shawn's heart beating rapidly and he could feel the Swim Suit ~~jockey shorts~~ separating from his stomach just below her searching hand.

"No, no, I ... I guess that might be a good idea."

Polly's hand slipped lower on his stomach and came to rest firmly grasping his now man-sized penis. She tapped it gently with her fingertips.

"You get in and start the water. I'll be just a minute!" and she turned her head slightly running the tip of her tongue from his chest to the top of his Swim Suit, ~~jockey shorts~~. Her hand pulled the Suit ~~shorts~~ down and the tongue followed.

...

For the first ten minutes, Jeremy McTabbish held little hope Marvin Cox would be useful in the prosecution. Jack insisted on butting into the conversation, seemingly acting it ~~seemed~~ like an ~~the~~ attorney for Cox, and each time Jeremy thought he was making progress Jack would send the conversation careening off in a new direction. Jeremy was running out of time.

"Jack, I do appreciate your trying to help here; it might be better if you would give me a couple of minutes alone with Mr. Cox."

Jack looked at Marvin. "That's OK," he said, motioning Jack into retreat.

"I cannot promise you there will be no prosecution of you; but I can assure you my office will be much less inclined to prosecute to the letter of the law if you agree to help."

"You mean I get off light?"

"Yes, something like that". Jeremy thought, 'He's been watching too much American television!' "Look, you know much of the evidence we have; we don't have Plentiful or Minister Harvey. They may never return, but we can still clear this matter up without them. Here is what I can promise; you've had an excellent work record at Cable and Wireless. I think given the circumstances of what just happened, they can be convinced they need a new security department to protect their customer's privacy. What better man to head up that security department than yourself!"

"You do that for me?"

"I will speak with Cable and Wireless on your behalf. How can we prosecute a man fully if he is going to head up their new security department?"

That moved Cox; he actually smiled.

"Yes, yes. What I learn I now use to protect customers. That's good!"

"Do we have an agreement, then?"

"Yes, we agree."

"Good. Now let's get over to the Cable and Wireless office."

...

Robin Lewster had Seybold and Brown in his office by 7:30. Seybold was

doing most of the talking, brainstorming about the telephone company avoiding a string of lawsuits. He genuinely feared the fallout which might result ~~occur~~ from public knowledge of the extent of the tapping. Lewster, on the other hand, was worried mostly about being transferred to a more remote, less hospitable Cable and Wireless enclave. Unfortunately, he couldn't remember one less desireable than Grand Turk; and that worried him all the more.

Brown had his technical documentation completed. He understood he might be asked to demonstrate the taps to the Chief Minister, and explain how they were installed and found. All of this had been worked out between the AG and Lewster Sunday evening over the instrument of choice, the telephone.

Reggie Seybold was now focusing on a point of special concern to him.

"Mr. Brown, how can we insure this is not likely to happen again? Home office is going to ask this question."

"Someone in the telephone company must have the training required to spot taps within the exchange; you saw how quickly I taught you to do it?"

"Yes, quite. Robin, if your work force performed such a check say once or twice per month, and the man performing the check logged off he had done so, wouldn't you be better able to deal with the threat?"

"I suppose, but how do we prevent the tappor from becoming the tappee? If Cox had been our checker here, for example, he could sign off there being no taps and then go about it himself just as he did."

Seybold was mulling this over when Robin's secretary appeared at the door. "You have guests" she reported. "The AG, and, our Mr. Cox."

There was total quiet in the room; Seybold spoke first. "Speak of the devil!".

"We'll be just a moment" he told the secretary. "I'll ring you." When she

had closed the door he looked at Seybold.

"How long do you suppose they've had him? And why would he bring Cox here?"

Seybold shook his head; he had no answers.

"What the bloody hell are we supposed to do? Treat him like a long lost friend or returning hero?"

Seybold again had no answers.

"Alright then, let's see what the AG has up his sleeve." Robin reached for his intercom button. "We are ready; send them in please."

Cox entered the room first followed closely by Jeremy. Cox looked straight at Lewster but walked to a vacant chair. Jeremy open the dialogue.

"Gentlemen; I know you are surprised by our guest. Mr. Cox contacted me only in the last half hour and has turned himself in voluntarily. I brought him along for two reasons; I didn't wish to be late to this meeting, and, I believe he may be useful to us in dealing with the Chief Minister's allegations."

"This is highly out of the ordinary-" began Lewster.

"Rather. But so is this entire situation. Unless you have excellent reasons for asking Mr. Cox to leave, I suggest we get on with the meeting."

Lewster again. "He is being arrested, yes?"

"He has voluntarily turned himself and he has voluntarily agreed to supply us with information we seek. He is not officially being detained at this moment and as long as Mr. Cox continues to cooperate with us, I am against his detention."

"This is ~~highly~~ MOST irregular. This man-."

"Just a minute Robin." It was Seybold. "I think Jeremy is onto something

quite clever here and I suggest we let him continue." He could see Lewster was not pleased with his position, so he added "If it makes you less concerned, I take full Cable and Wireless responsibility for his being here."

"If you will do this-."

"I will."

"So noted. Now, let's get on with our plans for the meeting with the CM."

Jeremy drew his legal pad from the briefcase and ~~began going over~~ detailed the scenario he had outlined. There were no comments until the end. Seybold asked the question.

"You drew this up before the appearence of Mr. Cox?"

"Correct."

"Do you see a position for Mr. Cox in our dog and pony show for the Chief Minister, then?"

All eyes turned on Marvin, who had listened intently. He now more fully understood the range of charges against the conspirators and while he still felt comfortable with his agreement with the AG, he was suddenly concerned about the seriousness of the possible charges. 'It had all seemed so easy, and almost innocent' he reflected to himself.

Jeremy asked the question. "Marvin, would you be willing to stand in front of the Chief Minister and explain what you did?"

It was not that Marvin Cox was especially political; he hung around the GDP people primarily because his ex-boss, Harvey, was a GDP person. And he voted for the GDP in the election for the same reason. But Marvin's interests were women, fast cars and money. Politics was neither fun nor interesting to him. He had no special fear of the Chief Minister; he barely

knew the man.

"How public this be?" he asked.

"Public? What do you mean?"

"I mean you want me to explain to the CM how we tapped and recorded messsages?"

Jeremy prodded him. "That is one option we are thinking about."

"So how public? I do this in front of TV cameras and radio microphones, or I do it just for the CM?"

Jeremy nodded. Now he understood. "Oh no, if you did this, and you must volunteer to do it as we cannot force you to do so, it would be the three of us, the CM, and maybe one other person from the CM's office. No TV cameras, no microphones."

"If I do this, it help me?"

Jeremy was not prepared to spring his suggestion for a security detail within Cable and Wireless, just yet. Quickly, he must bend the conversation in a new direction.

"Our agreement is between you and I. Yes, this will help you with my handling of this matter."

Marvin did not hesitate. "Then I do it."

Jeremy was pleased and relieved. "Good. Very good. Robin, where would you suggest we make use of Mr. Cox's volunteered services?"

Robin was still trying to disect the private message he heard passing from Jeremy to Cox. He wanted to raise the question of 'a private agreement ~~what agreement~~ have you made, privately' but thought better of it. 'That's between the AG and the thief,' he thought to himself; 'I best stay out of government affairs.'

His long pause was mistaken for deep thought. "There are two possibilities; if the CM refuses to believe Cable and Wireless didn't know about this or was behind this, then we ask Marvin to set the record straight. Or, we simply start off with Marvin conducting the tour and explaining that he did this, with Samuel Stubbs and others. I'm not sure which would be most effective."

Jeremy had a stronger opinion. "I opt for holding Marvin in reserve; let him stay in this office while the CM visits the exchange ~~here for the dog and pony show~~. Then if the CM is obstinate and determined to make a scene accusing the company of the tapping, we come back ~~here~~ and privately meet in this office with Mr. Cox."

Seybold liked that plan and could see how Jeremy was trying to maintain control of the political football. "That makes good sense to me. There is no need in making public the inner details of this operation if we can avoid public exposure. If the Chief Minister will back off on his charges without using Mr. Cox, I vote for that."

Lewster now saw the wisdom of keeping the operation as small and quiet as possible. But he had a new worry just now forming in his mind.

"Suppose the CM shows up with a sizeable entourage; we can't have six or twelve people trooping through our show and tell. Ten minutes after this is all over, there will be as many versions of this as people here, spread from Grand Turk to Portobello."

Jeremy. "I have an answer. Because the Governor's hot-line was amongst those tapped, he has evoked a cloak of National Security over all of this. I will simply explain that. If there is an entourage, we respectfully request only the CM see the inner workings of the system."

Lewster. "Are we agreed then?" All heads, including Cox, ~~shook~~ nodded in unison.

"Marvin, do you understand you will be left in this office while the Chief Minister makes his personal tour; that only if we feel he must be told by you how all of this happened will we bring him into this office?"

"Yes, I understand. But ...?"

"Yes?"

"I not eat since yesterday. Could I get something-."

Jeremy was smiling. "Most certainly; I'm sure Mr. Lewster will send out for a breakfast for you; right Robin?"

necessary? → (If looks could have killed, Jeremy would be laying on the floor.) Robin's glance was filled with death rays that conveyed. 'Feed a bloody thief, in my own office?'

"Yes, I'm certain that can be arranged." He ~~glanced at~~ checked his watch; it was 8:55. "Gentlemen, I suggest we go out front to await the arrival of the Chief Minister."

end-

Chapter Nineteen

"Good afternoon. This is Robert Manchester with the afternoon edition of WIV news for Monday December 29th. It is 1 PM.

"Chief Minister Orville Smythe held a public news conference less than one hour ago at the Legislative Chambers in Grand Turk. Some two weeks ago, Smythe accused the British government of tapping his telephones and assigning investigators to follow him. Just this past Saturday the Chief Minister announced he would elaborate on his phone tapping charges today. WIV has learned Smythe met with officials of Cable and Wireless and Attorney General Jeremy McTabbish at 9 this morning. Following a one hour meeting at the telephone headquarters, the Chief Minister, representatives of the telephone company and the Attorney General drove to a private home in the back salina district of Grand Turk. Approximately two hours later the Chief Minister held his news conference, and here by recording is part of what he said.

"I regret to announce a plot to undermine the security of the Turks and Caicos Islands has been uncovered by investigators. Nearly three dozen illegal telephone taps have been found at the Grand Turk and Portobello telephone exchanges. Among the telephones tapped were those of government leaders including a tap on Governor Burnside's private hot line.

"Investigators have also found two locations, one on Portobello and one on Grand Turk, where the tapped lines were illegally monitored and recorded by scurilous individuals determined to destroy the security of our nation.

"My government, with the cooperation of the police department, has unraveled the intrigue behind this plot and I have asked Governor Burnside to immediately issue warrants for the arrest of two individuals believed to

be involved in this dastardly deed.

"On the matter of who was responsible, I am not going to reveal their names until all those suspected are in police custody. I do wish to commend the recent cooperation of Cable and Wireless and the British staff here for their assistance this weekend in bringing this matter to a close.

"I wish to further note that because I had the courage to speak out on this matter weeks ago, and throw the fear of God into many people, my government was finally able to secure the cooperation needed to bring this matter to an end.

"This morning I toured the equipment facility of Cable and Wireless as well as equipment maintained by the perpetrators of this threat to our security. I am satisfied that everything is now being done to return our communications system to a secure state.

"Finally, because of this incident, I have now been able to obtain the agreement of Cable and Wireless that in the future new security measures will be taken to avoid a repeat of this situation. As your Chief Minister I can assure each of you that your telephone conversations are once again secure, and private."

"Chief Minister Orville Smythe at his news conference just after noon today. WIV has also learned a charter flight apparently carried two individuals to Port-au-Prince, Haiti Sunday afternoon; those individuals are believed to be the ring leaders in the telephone coup. The names of the suspects and their nationality is not known at this time.

"More news after this message from Grace Bay Nursery."

Governor Burnside, Livingston Thatcher and Jeremy McTabbish were sitting in the Governor's den at Waterloo listening to the newscast.

"The man has a way with words," began Livingston, reaching to turn down the commercial message. "He has cleverly made it appear it was his office that instigated the investigation and we dragged out feet. I notice he gives his own office full credit for uncovering the plot."

"He read the statement; I watched him do it," noted Jeremy. "I wonder who wrote it for him; he can barely write a coherent sentence without help. He ad-libs beautifully, but writes poorly."

"I noticed a similarity of wording," began the Governor "between the newscast Manchester read and the words read by our Chief Minister. Did either of you notice that?"

"You mean the phrasing and the language itself?" asked Jeremy.

"Precisely. I'd bet you could let Smythe or Manchester read opposite parts and it wouldn't make any difference."

Thatcher was pensive. "Which means ..."

"Nothing perhaps. But wasn't there enough time for Smythe to get on the phone to Manchester after touring the set up at Plentiful's, and his news conference, so that Manchester could have written his statement for him?"

Thatcher's eyes lit up. "And then FAXed it back to the CM to read?"

"Precisely. Just an odd thought. It really doesn't make a whits difference in this case. But I find it odd none the less."

"Governor, may I serve lunch to the three of you here?" Mindy stood at the doorway.

"Yes, if you please. We have much to do and that would help. Jeremy, review for me where we are at this time."

The AG reached for his ever present and well worn brief case pulling out a sheath of papers.

"I believe we might call this the damage control phase. If there is one aspect which the Chief Minister, Cable and Wireless and we agree upon, it is we try to move this out of the newscasts as fast as possible. Our biggest problem will probably be Benjamin Dornfield and his newspaper since he is a native and has access to the inside gossip which moves with lightning speed on the ~~tom-tom~~ coconut free circuit."

"If I agree this is a danger at the end of the review, remind me about this point. I may have a way to handle Dornfield," suggested the Governor.

...

Avery Burgess listened to the 1 o'clock news from the comfort of his air conditioned pickup-truck cab. His own sources assured him Harvey had escaped to Haiti, with Avery's old nemisis Plentiful. He also had the name of Grand Turk co-conspirator Marvin Cox, and knew Cox turned himself in to the AG this morning. Twice since 9 AM he tried to reach Pauline Conner; her office did not know where she was, her home telephone went unanswered. That Pauline could not be found greatly concerned Avery.

Burgess had sources of information in the native quarter which no-one else could touch. The native secretaries for both the Governor and the AG were loyal to Avery. Moreover, one of Velma's closer cousins worked at Waterloo as housekeeper. He had but to ask any of these women for information and they were more than anxious to share. And there was a system of rewarding those who helped him in this way; their loyalty was important to Avery.

The areas of influenece he had difficulty infiltrating were within the offices of the government ministers. When Smythe and his Grand Democratic Party came to power in 1988, a wholesale reshuffling of civil service

positions had followed. Although civil service jobs were, by law, guaranteed to be above political patronage, Smythe's people wasted no time clearing out all secretaries and office personnel who were not ardent party supporters. 'Unfortunately,' he knew 'my influence at the grass roots level is thin outside of my old political party.'

Avery's truck ~~pulled~~ came to a stop in front of the closed gates at Polly's complex. He tapped his horn and a tall, thin Haitian ambled towards the gate.

"Mrs. Conner is here?" he asked.

Arnold now recognized the visitor. Everyone on Portobello knew who Avery Burgess was and what he represented. He opened the gate and flashed a toothy smile.

"Yes, Mr. Burgess, Miss Polly in house."

Avery waved his hand and took his foot from the break. Arnold scrambled out of the way and pushed the gate open the last few feet.

Polly was just exiting the shower when she heard the horn. This was her second shower for the day and this time she was alone. Shawn's sweat soaked body ~~laid~~ lay in a ~~half~~ semi- awake state sprawled endways sideways across the rumpled blue silk sheets of the adjoining bedroom.

Rubbing her hair vigorously with a heavy towel, she walked to the partially opened window to peer through the louvers. 'Oh my God, it's Avery!' she thought to herself. A robe hung on a hook nearby; she wrapped it about her body and threw open the bathroom door leading to the kitchen area.

"Lannie, Lannie!" she called out.

"Yes, Miss Polly?" came the response.

"Lannie, Avery Burgess is coming down the driveway. Invite him in and I

will be five minutes. I have to dress. Oh yes, give him a Diet Coke."

"Yes Miss Polly. You want sheets changed now?" There was a certain devilment buried deeply inside of Lannie.

Polly never really knew whether Lannie was just plain stupid or terribly bright. "No, Lannie, later for the sheets."

Polly shut the bathroom door and raced to her closet, past Shawn's face up nude body. Streams of perspiration still trickled down his cheeks and neck. He was now soundly asleep, but, she noticed his penis remained erect and flushed red.

"There is no substitute for youthful vigor" she said to herself softly, standing before a rack filled with dozens of sun dresses.

Selecting a cool dress which she hoped would hide her own elevated body temperature she slid it on over panties and a hastily selected bra. A pair of flip-flops crammed onto her feet, she again passed by Shawn retracing her steps to the bathroom. Nothing about his position nor body condition had changed. 'This is Monday and he doesn't leave until Thursday!' she thought to herself. 'God give me the strength!'.

A quick application of eyeliner and lipstick, a shot from the hair dryer; she was on her way.

"Hello, Avery; what a pleasant surprise!" She hugged the large man.

Avery very much enjoyed his private times alone with Pauline. He knew her feelings towards him were genuine and with Pauline he came closer to being his natural self than with anyone else alive.

He stood gazing at her flashing eyes and wide smile with both hands resting gently upon her shoulders.

"You look no worse for wear," he began, noticing a sudden flush in her

cheeks. "I apologize for visiting without warning. I did try to reach you by telephone first. A great deal is happening and there are things you should know."

"Why don't we sit in my office?" Polly suggested. In the back of her mind was Shawn awakening and stumbling from her bedroom in a daze; perhaps dressed as she last saw him. The corner of her mouth turned up as she visualized this. The office was down a hallway, out of the traffic pattern.

"I'll bring my drink along," agreed Avery. "I didn't hear from you after you met with Karen; how did it go?"

"Very well, she starts work next Monday." They were turning from the hallway into the office. "I ~~may~~ have been afraid to use the phone, after our talk yesterday morning."

Avery sat down in a chair which Bill had once used ~~as his own~~. "I understand you were an eye witness to the fire and crash that killed Stubbs?"

Polly smiled. Avery knew everything; almost.

"Yes, I saw it all. All of the blood, those tiny children crying and the people screaming with flames all around. I will remember it forever."

Avery was deeply moved. He looked closely at her eyes but could not read the mixed signals there. Leaning forward he took her fingers between his two hands.

"It was God's will those children and adults be saved. As for Stubbs, he was playing a dangerous game and it caught up with him." He paused, & continu

"...how up to the minute are you with what has happened since that time? Do you know about Harvey?"

Polly looked down at their clasped hands and shook her head.

"No, I'm ... I'm afraid I'm been totally out of touch with the island, from about the time Karen left."

"I see." Avery was trying to catch her eyes but she was avoiding him.

"Then let me fill you in. Harvey and a woman named Plentiful have escaped; they flew to Haiti yesterday afternoon. A man named Cox is being detained by the British in Grand Turk; he and Stubbs were the inside people on the two islands. They did the actual tapping."

"So it was true, the phones were tapped?"

"Yes. The man killed in the accident was the agent here for Harvey. Approximately three dozen taps were discovered on Grand Turk and here, I don't have a list yet, but I will."

"Why were they doing this? Was it political?"

"Apparently not; it seems the information may have been sold. You know, people getting the inside track on real estate and other deals."

"Selling information? How cruel!"

Avery was amused by her reaction. 'Was this not merely a high tech version of what you and I do each day?' he thought to himself.

"Stupid anyhow. A friend of mine who searched through the monitoring equipment in the burned out apartment says there were 12 lines going there. This was a large scale operation."

"Who would buy this ...this information?"

"Attorneys, real estate agents, maybe just people trying to get a business jump on competitors. I have a bigger question, and that is what brings me to you at this time."

Polly now looked up at Avery's face. He smiled at her and continued.

"Harvey ran the deal, Stubbs did the wiring and mechanics. Somebody had

to monitor the equipment in the apartment, and sell the information. I've thought about this all morning and believe there are at least two or three people unaccounted for on this island."

Polly grimmaced. "Go on."

"One or two people had to be involved in the monitoring. My friend says the equipment there could have tape recorded the conversations on the affected lines. So maybe there was no need for a full time staff. But there still had to be someone who solicited the business, separated the useful information from the useless, and delivered it to the client."

"The dead man...Cox?"

"Stubbs; Cox is the man they caught in Grand Turk. No, I think not. Many of the customers would have been white. I don't see Stubbs handling that. I think someplace out there a white person is very nervous right now; afraid he, or she, is going to have a policeman knock on the door."

"I see. Who could that be?"

Avery was now approaching the edge of the ravine. When he had run this scenario through his mind for several hours, he kept coming back to Pauline. 'She knows everything' he had rationalized. 'She knows things nobody else knows. If she only tells me a part of what she knows, how much more might she really know?' He sighed aloud.

"I hoped you might help me figure that out," and his eyes locked on her pupils. She didn't blink; there was no change in the tension of her palm, grasped between his two hands. There was no facial expression movement until she spoke.

"Tell me about the person who sold the information in Grand Turk."

"Apparently it was Plentiful; she's a native woman who has a very

unsavory reputation. She has no morals and she is well known, and, I'm afraid, respected, as the best gossip on the island."

"She's the one who left with Harvey?"

"Yes."

"Well, aside from ~~she~~ being black, your description fits someone here perfectly."

Avery was searching his mind. Polly was suggesting a white equivilent of Plentiful. Polly waited a decent interval and then said "Luscious...the wife of James Lane!"

Avery broke into a smile. 'Of course; it fits perfectly!'. He smiled at her briefly and then his face turned to a scowl. 'How could I have suspected Polly was behind this; God please forgive me!'.

Polly spoke again. "Don't you see; Luscious and James are close to Harvey. James does most of the design work for the new government construction. And we all know she is passed around by James amongst government ministers. Her reputation is positively wicked! And she is always huddling with some attorney or real estate person at one bar or another. It has to be her!"

Avery always tried to avoid the unseemly side of life. He enjoyed a good bit of sexual gossip as much as anyone, but he never repeated it; not to his wife, not even to Pauline. He was reluctant to be drawn into a discussion of Luscious's widely known sexual activities, even now.

"She is not well thought of," he began, "and she is certainly the most prominent gossip on this island. Yes ... it does fit. I don't know why I had overlooked her as a candidate..."

"Do you have others you suspect?" Polly asked.

Now Avery diverted his eyes and looked about for his can of Diet Coke. His hands loosened their grasp on her palm and he said nothing.

Polly read his reactions intuitively. A lump rose in her throat and she was suddenly conscious of a hot flash. thru her chest, onto her cheeks.

"Avery, surely....surely you didn't suspect ...me?"

He stood up, grasping the chair arm for support as pain shot through his reconstructed knees. He would not lie to Pauline.

"Pauline, this hurts me deeply. I am very ashamed and am asking The Lord to forgive me for holding these thoughts. Nobody loves you more deeply than I; there is no better friend for me on this island than you. Do you understand that?"

Tears were welling up in her eyes. She felt the same emotions for this big man.

"Yes Avery, I understand."

"I had bad thoughts. They are sinful thoughts and I am asking for your forgiveness. Please Pauline," and he moved forward, reaching for her hands and lifting upward, raising her from the chair.

Polly was now crying and deep sobs followed. Avery placed his large arms around her and held her close. He too began to cry.

...

"Governor, that brings us to the question of catching the missing culprits." Jeremy had just completed his review of their present position.

"A rather tough bunch, wouldn't you agree?"

"I'm not so sure; it seems to me it just got out of hand."

"Quite. Now, we have at least one person on Portobello to catch up with; perhaps two?"

Jeremy flipped his pad to a set of notes he made on Portobello.

"I interviewed people there who recall three individuals going in and out of the apartment; one of course was Stubbs."

"And the other two?"

"A native woman whom it appears was there 8 to 12 hours a day. We have her name; it's ... Rita. Rita Rigby. I suggest this Rigby woman was the operative; she ran the equipment. The second person was a white woman. But she was never seen closely and only came at night, often around 10 or 11. She always wore a scarf over her head and a long coat, even when it was warm."

The Governor laughed. "Real cloak and dagger stuff, eh?"

"Quite extrordinary. I'm afraid we don't have much to go on with her except she is tall; a relative term for a native observer."

"Perhaps the Rigby woman can help us pin down the mysterious white lady?"

"My thoughts exactly. ~~But~~ And I felt I should be present when Rigby is questioned, even do it myself. I don't want to assign this to any of our detectives there."

"Can you do this tomorrow?"

"Yes, with your permission. Lieutenant LaSarde has found the Rigby woman and says he can deliver her for questioning when I wish."

what is DC - district commissioner?

"I suggest you do it in the DC's office rather than the police station; and use the back door. There is no point in fueling the rumors."

"Yes sir."

"Now, after the CM's press conference today, will he allow this to die?"

Jeremy laid down his pad and took a pencil which he held tightly between both hands. 'This is what it all boils down to, doesn't it?' he thought.

'How much longer will the CM beat this horse, and how many headlines will appear in London newspapers?'

"I think we must have a closed meeting with Smythe. I detest having to bargain with this man, but I see no other way. Surely he knows his own Minister was involved in this and his own political party preservation will depend upon his getting out of this gracefully?" His pencil snapped in half.

"~~If I may be blunt~~, We cannot count on that. His record, to date, is appalling. I suggest a meeting, quickly. Even this afternoon."

Thatcher checked his watch. He had said little for the past hour and it was now 2:30. If there was to be a meeting, it would fall on him to set it up.

"Where? In your office?"

"No Jeremy, here. I fancy his coming to Waterloo, just to remind the man the British are still in charge," responded the Governor.

"Is 4:30 alright?" asked Thatcher.

The Governor turned to Jeremy. "Two hours; can you handle that?"

The Attorney General knew much of the burden would fall on his shoulders; the Governor would request him to present the review and his excellency would serve primarily as the moderator. "Two hours?"

"Well, yes. The sooner this is done, the better our chances to bury it."

"Livingston? See what you can arrange, on the kitchen phone."

...

When Polly's rhythmic sobbing subsided Avery gently helped his friend to her chair. In the years he had known the lady, he had never seen tears; not even when they visited just before she went to the states to bury Bill.

"Avery," she said through tear stained lips. "I don't know what to say. I

do understand your logic. That's one of the things I so admire about you; your analytical mind. I forgive you, I do," rubbing her lips with a hand.

Avery was searching his pocket for a hankerchief to dab away the wetness still clinging to his own high cheek bones.

"Thank you Pauline. I am guilty of the worst transgression; suspecting a close friend of deceit. It won't happen again."

Polly found a box of tissues buried under a growing pile of paperwork on her desk. She used two to clean her own eyes, face and lips.

"Now, our emotions are out in the open, let's get on with our mystery. We do love a good mystery, yes!"

Avery laughed and blew his nose. "Yes, we do, at that."

"Before we condemn Luscious, shouldn't we consider other prospects? I assume after deciding on someone, you will want to do something about this person?"

Avery cleared his throat, fighting to regain his own self control.

"Yes, ahh, well. I thought the Governor might like some help wrapping up this mess on our island. And between you and I, well, we should be able to figure out who is reponsible here."

"Let me toss out some names for consideration. OK?"

"Go ahead."

"Sindy Wicker. She even has a FAX gossip newsletter she sends around the island every day."

"Perhaps. But her husband, Denver, would throttle her if she did such a thing. I doubt she is it..."

"Patricia Pratt, our favorite island nurse."

"I know you don't care for Patty, but believe me, Pauline, she is a good,

honest person. No, not her."

"OK, what about Manny Morgan? He is very hungry..."

Manuel Morgan was a constant thorn in Avery's side. A member of a successful local family, Manny had used the collapse of the NDC following the arrest of Nat Simpson to take over Avery's party. Only 25, Manny was cocky, outspoken, and given to plotting and scheming. When the old guard of the NDC had run to hiding after Simpson's arrest, young Manny grabbed enough votes from the party faithful to be elected to head the National Democratic Coalition. All hopes Avery had for a return to political power through the NDC were dashed by the meteoric rise of Morgan as party chairman. That he, Avery, no longer had a party of his own was a profound worry to the man.

"Well, that's interesting. He certainly would have no scruples about this activity. And since he wants to take over every business on this island, having a source of quick money would appeal to him. But, we forget the fact he would have to work with or for Harvey. I can't see the head of the NDC working for a Minister of the GDP no matter how much money was involved. No, that's a volatile relationship. But an interesting thought."

"Perhaps one of our fine island attornies?"

"I did consider them this morning. Do you know we have 19 attornies on this island now? Can you imagine that: ten years ago there were none!"

"I think flies attract flies," giggled Polly.

Avery laughed as well. "Both of us might discount our own private attornies, but that still leaves 17. Where would we start? Anyone of them would benefit from this scheme."

"I'm not so sure I'd discount my own," Polly teased. "You're right, which one would you select as a suspect?"

There was silence; both reviewing the list of attorneys on the island. Polly smiled first; just as Avery said it.

"Charles Scott!"

"Yes, he works closely with Harvey. Didn't he get the work permit for Paul Monasto?"

"Charles Scott. He was Bill's attorney as I recall--."

"Yes, he still handles the estate on behalf of Bill's children. You know that Bill did not simply leave his assets to the kids; they only receive a little bit each year?"

"No, I have never pried into Bill's affairs."

"Well, Scott has changed in recent years. Don't you work with him on a few boards or something?"

"Yes, but I don't see him enough to really know the man anymore. Did you know he was the first attorney to set up an office here?"

"I believe Bill had told me that; he and Scott were very close. Sometimes I felt likle an outsider when we met to discuss Bill's affairs. Almost like I didn't belong and was not welcome there."

"Yes, well. Scott is a prospect. I don't think we can simply dismiss him. And I have one more. Dornfield."

Avery held the newspaper publisher Benjamin Dornfield in total disdain. If he could buy a one-way ticket to Tibet for one person, it would be Dornfield.

"Oh, I don't think Ben-" began Polly.

"He has no morals, no sense of integrity. He has no loyalty and he plays every side against every other side. Moreover, he is a bad business person and never has any money. He blames everyone around him for his failures. He

blames me for being a successful black, he blames white people such as yourself for coming here and taking over, he is just not a stable person!"

Avery's anger was evident, bordering on becoming irrational. 'Dornfield is definently a hot button for Avery,' she thought. 'Even Manny Morgan didn't elicit this type of response.'

"Well, if you feel that strongly, add him to your list."

"That's the tough part; I despise the man, but in my heart I don't feel he did this. I guess I just wish it was him so we could be rid of the scoundrel."

"For what it's worth, I don't think he was involved either. But you decide whether to mention him to the Governor. Any more candidates?"

Avery locked his hands together ~~against~~ in a fist under his chin. For nearly a minute neither one said a word. Polly thought she heard a sound. She listened more carefully; she did, very faintly. It was Shawn.

"Polly, Polly...where are you? I am lonely!"

Flustered she rose from her chair and dashed for the door. "I'll be just a minute Avery; a house guest!" She walked briskly down the hallway and into the living room. Across the living room, the door to her bedroom was open and half in and out was a naked Shawn. Polly ran to him quickly checking for Lannie. She was no place to be seen.

"Where have you been? I woke up and you were gone. I missed you!" he ~~began~~ spying her running towards him. Polly's smile barely hid her anixty. Reaching the door she placed both hands at chest level and hit Shawn with the palms as she bounced through the doorway. He caught her under the armpits and together they were propelled backward onto the king sized bed. Shawn's hands went immediately for Polly's thighs and raced upwards towards

her panties. His mind was focused on a single craving.

"Shawn, Shawn, stop! Stop it right now, I have a visitor in my office. Shawn, the door is open!"

His lips had now found her breast and his teeth bit through the sun dress and bra searching for her nipple. Polly knew he was beyond control, unless...

Her right hand reached for his hard penis and she grabbed it and yanked. The sensation to Shawn was at first exhiliration followed immediately by horrendous pain. Every muscle in his body tensed and then relaxed in shocked response. She was on top of him on the bed where they had fallen. His teeth relaxed their hold on her breast, his right hand which had found its way through her panties went limp.

"Shawn, baby, listen to me. I have a very important guest in the office. I need maybe ten more minutes with him, OK? Then, I promise if you will take a shower, I will be right back here. And I'll dismiss Lannie for tonight and we can run all over this house chasing one another in the nude. I promise, OK?"

She relaxed the tortuous hold. Slowly the pain in his face relaxed and a smile returned. He held her tightly to his body.

"I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me. Finish your work and I'll be here. But hurry, OK?"

Pushing herself from his grip she leaned forward and kissed him first on the lips, and then when her feet reached the floor, she bent down and gently kissed the head of his penis.

"Stay ready," she smiled and rubbed the tip with her thumb and forefinger.

Shawn lay in ecstasy watching as Polly straightened her dress and

turned for the doorway. When the closing door blocked his view of her retreat he reached for his genitals and began to massage gently.

...

Governor Burnside went to his bedroom at 4:10 PM to change into a suit. Even an off-the-record meeting with the Chief Minister had certain formalities to be observed. Jeremy had left at 3:30 to shower and change; Thatcher expected to sit quietly in a corner and when asked, the Governor said he looked quite presentable if he pulled his tie up tight. Mindy Burnside prepared cookies, tea, coffee and placed three bottles of beer in the fridge. Sometimes the CM preferred a cold American beer.

The policeman assigned to the Waterloo detail announced the arrival of the Chief Minister.

"Your excellency, the Honourable Chief Minister Orville Smythe, the Honourable Minister of Education William Stanfield and the Honourable Minister of Transport Stanley Hardgraves are here to see you."

Five chairs had been arranged in a semi-circle in front of the Governor's desk. A sixth, pointedly not in the circle, sat to the side. A small table of refreshments was set at the top of the semi-circle.

Thatcher, McTabbish and the Governor stood to the left of the doorway to greet the ministers. Stanfield entered first, followed by Hardgraves and then after a few seconds the Chief Minister. Each walked past the trio of Brits and each shook the outstretched hands. Plesantries were exchanged.

"Gentlemen, shall we be seated?" suggested the Governor. Livingston made a direct line for the chair set to the side so there would be no mistaking that each of the three ministers was to take a chair in the semi-circle.

It had been the Governor's idea that he would join them in the semi-

circle, to avoid any show of superiority and to indicate the British felt both sides were of equal stature in this matter. None of this was missed by the Chief Minister. He selected an end chair, perhaps to give him the room he often needed when he became antimated. It was his habit to stand in a meeting and pace, flailing his arms and raising his voice as he often did when preaching a sermon in his church on Sundays. Hardgraves took the chair next to the top man and Stanfield, the most worldly of the ministers sat down in the middle of the circle. The AG sat to his immediate right and the Governor took the end position opposite to the Chief Minister.

"There is tea and coffee on the table, as well as some sweets," began the Governor. "Perhaps the Chief Minister would prefer a cold beer?"

Smythe smiled his famous smile and shook his head slowly. "Not right now, thank you." The Chief Minister was a great student of American politics. It had been he who in 1986 coerced Bill Conner into placing the C-SPAN channel on Portobello's cable system. For the next two years, living in abject poverty on the island and plotting his own return to political power, Smythe had spent from 8 to 16 hours per day glued to C-SPAN's coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives and the American political system on an ancient 16 inch black and white screen. He owed his now flawless command of American English to the tutorship of C-SPAN. He owed his smile, his carefully orchestrated hand movements and his contrived facial expressions to his two year cram course in American politics.

Stanfield was the most educated of the ministers. He had chosen banking as his target field and attended university in Nassau. When he graduated, he ~~and~~ found ~~applied for~~ work within the Bahamian banking industry. ~~he found work quickly enough~~. But he also found a strong bias against non-Bahamians in the banking

world. When his Bahamian black managers told him he would never make it to the upper levels of Bahamian banking, regardless of his skills, he was infuriated. It was here he first experienced prejudice; black against black. He was a 'TI' or Turks Islander and Bahamians viewed TIs with disdain; barely a step above Haitians. Licking his wounds, he left Nassau in disgust and moved his wife and two children to the United States. Without a Green Card, few opportunities opened to him in Florida. He couldn't work in a skilled job without a Green Card; he couldn't get a Green Card because he had no job. It was a viscious Catch-22.

Out of desperation this man who had been rated number 19 in a graduating class of 112 in Nassau answered a classified advertisement for door to door salesmen. He accepted a job selling vacuum cleaners and following a month's training in the projects of eastern Ft. Lauderdale the employer packed he and his family up and shipped them to Mississippi.

In the 13 months he spent in rural southern Mississippi, William Stanfield learned the real meaning of prejudice. His superior was Mississippi white and dis-liked Stanfield's British accent and his resume. This white man had no other college graduates working for him; he himself had only gone as far as the 10th grade.

Out of pure cussed meanness, he assigned Stanfield to knock on doors in the rural white scratch farm districts and the poor white trash areas. Stanfield rose to be his single most productive field salesman but vowed when he had enough money saved his family would return to their real home: the Turks and Caicos Islands. He returned with a burning hatred for most whites and an intense dislike for the upper echelons of Bahamians.

Stanley Hardgraves was a fisherman from Middle Caicos. Although he did

attend high school briefly on Grand Turk, he had dropped out when his family could no longer afford to pay for his lodging and food. When Stanley was growing up, students from outside of Grand Turk wishing to attend high school had to find accomodations on the capital island since their own islands had no schools beyond the primary years. Stanley returned home at age 15 where he fished and farmed, much like his ancestors, until electricity arrived on his island in 1984. Then he found work with the electrical company. He was bright and studious but a quiet man, not quite sure how he could contribute to the growth of his nation. His home island still had no television, & Stanley's exposure to the outside world was very limited. He considered himself to be a very fortunate man; his election had led to his appointment as a Minister, and that in turn allowed him to move his wife and two sons to Grand Turk. The official functions, the black-white social life, and most of all the availability of television convinced Stanley there was much he could do for those still stranded on Middle Caicos. Stanley Hardgraves owed his life to Orville Smythe and he would never break that bond.

The Governor spoke. "Gentlemen, I thank you for coming on such short notice. We are experiencing the most dangerous threat of my limited time here. It is my wish that in this meeting we will be able to forge a workable plan to see us through this period. I don't believe anyone can profit from this without doing irrepairable damage to the Turks and Caicos Islands. I don't need to remind us that after the unfortunate arrest of Nat Simpson, our internal growth ground to an almost complete halt for two years. Overseas investors were afraid to bring their investments here; development all but stopped. I don't wish to be an alarmist, but if word were to get out

about the lack of internal security for government and private business matters, I fear we would experience a similar downturn. I hope between us we can work this out."

Jeremy spoke next. "I would like to add that since your administration has been in power, our economy has turned around rapidly, you have eliminated British grants-in-aid by raising local revenues, and your government has shown an excellent stability. By every measure, workers employed, new overseas corporations formed here, deposits in our banks, this country is now on a sound pathway to success. This is, in no small measure, due to your intelligent leadership, Mr. Smythe."

Smythe patted the lapel of his jacket. 'Yes, the tape recorder is operating' he told himself. He, Stanfield and Hardgraves each carried identical micro-cassette recorders. They had agreed since the cassette tapes recorded but 30 minutes each that his would run first, then on a signal Stanfield would begin his, and lastly Hardgraves would start his. Only feet away, two hidden microphones placed by the Governor himself were also picking up every nuance of the conversation and carrying these sounds to a set of reel to reel recorders hidden in his bedroom. His wife Mindy was monitoring the conversation and insuring the recorders were working. She really ~~did~~ enjoyed wearing the fancy earphones and watching the needles bounce on the recorder VU meters.

Good touch!

"I don't believe our life here has exactly reached a state of paradise yet," Smythe smiled, "but I do agree our party's policies have greatly benefitted our country. That said, let's go to the heart of this matter. Let me tell you what I believe the problems are; for you, and for me.

"First, I have a Minister who is now being sought by the police. I must

believe, given the evidence presented, that Mr. Harvey has disgraced us all. I have no explanation for this save his own greed and his abandonment of national policy for his own selfish business gains on Portobello. I accept limited responsibility for this; I selected a weak man who quickly forgot his own heritage.

"Secondly, we have a telephone company which allowed this to happen. I was shocked to learn this morning there have been no security programs in place; that virtually anyone working for Cable and Wireless could have walked into the exchange and done the same thing. With a staff of more than 100, I don't like those odds. I must blame them for being so lax as to allow this to happen.

"Third, from what the Attorney General tells me, this information was apparently being gathered for commercial sale. I am not ready to accept that totally, yet, but I do agree that because none of my phones, or Mr. Stanfield's phones or Mr. Hardgrave's phones were tapped, this would not appear to be politically motivated. On the other hand, I have only Cable and Wireless's word, and your word, that none of my own phones were tapped. So I can't be certain of this, can I?" The Chief Minister gazed around the room looking each man squarely in the eyes. And he rose from his chair.

Thatcher surpressed a smile. 'The man is now warmed up!' he thought to himself.

with his voice thundering three times, simply the rhythm continuously matching his cadence as the footsteps

"Let us accept for discussion this information was indeed gathered by Harvey and his cohorts. Who would it be sold to? The banks? Real estate agents? Private money lenders? Business people such as Avery Burgess? And who would stand to benefit from this information? People involved in our economy, that's who. And who runs our economy? You know the answer as well

as I; mostly whites, mostly ex-pats here to make a fast buck.

"I believe that like AIDS or polio or scarlett fever, the white fast buck ex-pats who have come here to rape our tiny economy have brought with them the germs of business disease. If they were not here, if they did not exert so much influence on our white-owned banks and real estate firms, there would not be this disease here. Minister Harvey would not have been infected by this disease; this would never have happened."

"Now, where do we go from here? First of all, I would like to avoid embarassment to my party. That is laying my fear on the table before you. And I ask for future discussion, 'Can we handle this without implicating Minister Harvey officially?' Second, somehow Cable and Wireless must be reprimanded for running such a sloppy ship this could happen in the first place. We all know they are the most dis-liked utility or business in this country. We simply cannot allow them to continue to operate in such a devil-may-care manner. Next, we must locate and prosecute those who were involved in this as a warning to others that no such activity will be tolerated in the future. I would now like to hear what you propose." And the CM sat down.

Burnside spoke again.

"Your points are well taken. You have been frank with us; I will do so in return.

"Embarassment to your party will be equal embarassment to myself and my office, to Cable and Wireless and to the business community. As I said in my opening remarks, nobody will profit from that. Therefore your concerns about revealing Minister Harvey's activities here are a part of that potential embarassment. I too would like to find a way to punish those responsible without ending up on the front page of Dornfield's newspaper for six or

eight weeks, or on WIV news every day for a month.

"I have a plan to do this, but it will require your office's cooperation as well as your own continued official silence on this matter. Let me defer to the Attorney General at this point since the plan is a legal one and he is our resident legal expert."

The Governor pointed a finger at Jeremy who, without thinking, stood and moved to the front of the semi-circle. He realized too late how this might offend the Ministers but determined to go ahead. To make it seem less like a lecture, he slid his bottom over the top of the Governor's desk and sat down in an informal posture.

"Yes, well, as you say, this is a very sticky situation. Here is my plan. We are still not certain who the agent was on Portobello. At this point it could be almost anyone. Here, we have Mr. Cox in voluntary ... ahh, well, he has agreed not to leave Grand Turk. We believe Miss Plentiful was the sales agent here and of course there is Minister Harvey.

"On Portobello, with Stubbs dead, and until we can catch the agent there, we have nobody. So right now today, we have only Cox to bring to trial. I should tell you that I have promised him if he continues to voluntarily cooperate with this investigation, we will bring much lesser charges against him.

"So you see, for the moment we have nobody to bring full charges against. If we should catch a responsible person on Portobello, the identity of that person may turn out to be such that nobody in this room will wish to bring charges."

Stanfield spoke quickly.

"How do you mean that, sir? Are you saying that if it turned out to be,

shall we say Avery Burgess or Barclays manager DeSoto, that we might not wish to prosecute?"

"Those are two possible examples. Or, suppose it turned out to be Linwold Astwood, your party chief there. It is possible-"

Stanfield fired back. "Not Linwold, that is not possible!" His anger was evident to all.

Jeremy recovered quickly. "I merely am trying to illustrate that until we know who this person is, we cannot create an iron clad plan for prosecution; wouldn't you agree?"

Stanfield shook his head. "Justice" he began "is so often prejudiced. I do not happen to fully agree with the Chief Minister. I am not so certain full prosecution should not be levied against Harvey. I hear you stating that if the guilty party on Portobello is a inconsequential white or a poor black, we hang 'em. If it is a rich white or an influential black, we let them go. I cannot vote for this policy!"

Smythe rose again.

"As you gentlemen can see, there is a difference of opinion within our party. Mr. Stanfield is well known for his devotion to equality. However, I believe when we are done, he will agree with the majority on this issue." He sat back down.

Jeremy continued after waiting to see if Stanfield had more to say. The minister was staring at the thumb on his right hand, wiggling it in a circle.

"Yes, well it wouldn't do to not have an honest expression of feelings here. Now, let us assume that we do ultimately have one or more persons to prosecute. Our concern then is to keep the details of prosecution out of the

local newspaper and off the local radio. So here is my plan. Since this entire matter involves national security ... it is the nature of stolen telecommunications that it should ... I believe the Governor has the power to decree that those so charged would be transported to another place to stand trial."

Stanfield again jumped in.

"You mean arrest them, quietly, and then spirit them out of here in the dead of night to someplace else? Doesn't this begin to sound like the arrest of our former Chief Minister Nat Simpson? Is this that same plan used again?

"No, not at all. Simpson was arrested in Florida by U.S. agents. He was tried in the U.S. judicial system because he was found to be accepting a bribe on U.S. soil. This is not like that at all."

"I fail to see a major difference" Stanfield responded.

"The difference is we arrest here, we charge here but because of national security we close off the courtroom and seal the record. There are no witnesses to the charging, there is no press. We ask the judge to allow us to transfer the venue to a different court within the British system, where the matter may be heard in a closed court but without the danger anything from inside the court will leak out to the local press."

Smythe stood again.

"Your excellency, we all know you came here from the British Virgin Islands where you were attorney general. I assume your own sense of law has not diminished by your being stationed here as Governor."

Burnside smiled and nodded in agreement; although he was not sure what he was agreeing to.

"Do you, then, tell us that this is a legal and ethical way to handle

this matter?"

"I do."

Smythe clasped his hands behind his back; this was the signal for Stanfield to reach into his coat pocket and start his own recorder.

"I like it. I don't think it jeopardises justice at all. In fact, I believe there may be better justice in another court than there might be here. Yes, I like it!" and he sat down.

"What is your view, now, Mr. Stanfield?" asked the Governor.

"I am not sure. I confess I am suspicious of a railroad job; or to use a southern American saying, a lynching. I am mostly concerned because I do not know who may ultimately be charged. Or how that person will defend themself if their attorney has to travel to some distant land at great expense."

The Governor had an offer.

"Suppose I said this government will pay all reasonable legal expenses of the accused; a local attorney can represent the accused?"

Stanfield smiled. "By this government, do you mean the costs for this would come out of our national budget, or would those costs come from the special funds earmarked for say your office and the office of the Attorney General?"

Both Jeremy and the Governor laughed aloud. Smythe was smiling but Stanfield saw no humor.

"Minister Stanfield, you are a very shrewd man. If you are asking me whether you, or I, will pay this legal cost, I must answer I had not thought that out."

"Your budget, or my budget, your excellency?"

"Alright, my budget."

Stanfield touched his coat for the familiar feel of a rotating tape drive. He felt it.

"Then I accept it, with the understanding that we have an additional discussion about this entire matter once we have identified the person on Portobello. This is not a carte blanco approval on my part. I approve in principal,, but not in specificity."

Jeremy thought to himself 'This man wasted his time in banking school; he should have trained as a lawyer.'

The Governor motioned for Jeremy to return to his seat.

"Perhaps this brings us to Minister Harvey. Chief Minister, what do you intend to do about his absence?"

Smythe resumed his standing position.

"I am not prepared to say; that will be a decision reached later today or tomorrow. I will tell you that in view of his unauthorized departure, I am considering placing him on indefinite leave of absence". He looked squarely at William Stanfield. "And without pay. Then within the party we will perhaps re-arrange the ministerial positions and come to you with a plan to replace him with a new minister. The wheels of government must keep turning, and the absence of one man cannot be allowed to slow us down."

"Good" said the Governor "I look forward to having your recommendation for his replacement."

Smythe continued to stand. "And now a question for the Attorney General. What is it you intend to do with Mr. Cox. It seems to me that if he is allowed to remain here, we all run the danger of his talking out of school, and doing great harm to us all."

Jeremy did not rise but he did straighten his posture in the chair.

"Yes, a good question. Let me refer to your own suggestion that Cable and Wireless be made to improve their own internal security. It occurs to me that the best way to prevent future incidents is to place a man in charge of security who knows and understands how this highly technical business works. I am suggesting that we both impress upon Robin Lewster the wisdom of creating a new security department, and placing Cox as its head."

Now Smythe began laughing. Shortly, Stanfield and Hardgraves were also laughing. The Governor glanced at Jeremy who was befuddled by the response. Smythe cut off his laughing to speak first.

"I love fox in the hen house stories! That is one of my favorite American fairly tales. And the irony of this is that Cable and Wireless trained this man in the first place!"

Jeremy looked at Stanfield and then Hargraves; did either have something to say? They did not.

"Well, that is my suggestion although I caution each of you this has not been mentioned to Robin Lewster at this point. I think I may need your help in persauding him of this wisdom."

Now Stanfield spoke. "I dislike being on a soap box, but are we not rewarding Mr. Cox for being a bad boy? One or more of his cohorts is likely to be charged with serious charges; I assume those charged will have the book thrown at them, including violation of national security. I also assume the jail time for conviction on this is quite sizeable. And now we are offering Mr. Cox what amounts to a promotion for his part in this?"

"Yes, and no. To build an iron clad case against whomever is charged, we require the testimony of Mr. Cox. This will be a complicated case because of its technical nature. I am not confident we can obtain a conviction

unless we have Cox's testimony."

Stanfield was not satisfied. "I see; partial justice again. And you also expect that Marvin Cox will forever keep his mouth shut in return for not being charged, and being promoted?"

"That is how I see it" answered Jeremy.

Smythe stood again. "Again I must interject that I like this plan. I do not know Mr. Cox well but I am certain that after the AG speaks with him, and I speak with him, his lips will be sealed for all time."

The Governor glanced again at Jeremy. 'What could the CM say to Cox that would guarantee his sealed lips?' he wondered. 'The natives DO have their own way of metting out justice; ways I will never understand.'

"Alright" said the Governor, "I guess that brings us to Mr. Harvey personally. Our plan is to issue an indictment against him as well, seal that indictment in the AG's office, and then hold it until his return. If, on the other hand he elects never to return, well, the indictment would remain sealed forever."

Stanfield responded. "In other words, if Harvey should happen to hear about this sealed indictment, and if he should happen to learn that others involved have been arrested, charged and shipped away to some other British territory, he might decide to never return?"

Smythe spoke before Jeremy could.

"I dislike sounding like a broken record, to paraphrase my Minister of Education, but I like it. I believe that if the AG did this, Mr. Harvey's temporary absence might well turn into a permanent disappearence." It had worried the Chief Minister that whatever they did might be a short term solution to a long term problem. He didn't want Larry Harvey showing up in

1992 just as he and his party were running for re-election.

The Governor addressed the group, "Minister Stanfield? Do you have something further?"

"No, I think not. I would ask if we were on record that my objections to the selective system of justice be noted. And I re-emphasize the actual disposition of the charges against the unknown person on Portobello must be discussed anew once we have this person in custody. May I ask how long that might be?"

The Governor looked at Jeremy. He wished that question had not come up.

"I think shortly. We do have some leads and some evidence. Unfortunately, Mr. Harvey had this business arranged so that Cox did not know very much about the Portobello branch of the operation. I suppose he did that for his own security."

"I see. Will you advise us as soon as you do have this person in custody?"

"Of course."

Smythe had the last concern and he rose again. As he did so he clasped his hands behind his back staring at Hardgraves. The man knew what to do.

"The newspaper. We all know that for every story broadcast on WIV, the streets are now filled with ten stories. I heard today that Harvey flew away to Haiti with Plentiful because he had been stealing telephones. That is dangerously close to the truth. And Dornfield will hear these stories and he'll print whatever he wishes. How can all of our careful plans be guaranteed when we have Dornfield out there ready to publish half truths?"

The Governor cleared his throat.

"This concerns me greatly. I know your office has very little real influence with Mr. Dornfield."

The CM laughed again and glanced at Hardgraves to be sure his machine was now running.

"Yes, unfortunately Mr. Dornfield has not only his own drummer but his own band inside of his head. We don't march to the same music."

"Quite, nor does he march to any tune I am familiar with. But I do have a thought on how to deal with him. Unfortunately, I would betray a confidence if I shared it with you. I know this is asking a great deal, but please allow me to pursue this plan tomorrow morning. Then perhaps we should hold another meeting tomorow afternoon. Fortunately for us Mr. Dornfield's newspaper is only weekly, and as we are all painfully aware, it closes at noon Wednesday."

Stanfield had been locked away in deep thought. He was aware of the question by Smythe and the Governor's response. But his subconscious was working on another plan.

"This national security business; how strong is the law there?"
He looked straight at Jeremy, sitting next to him.

"Well, it is the strongest law we have. If something threatens our national security, the Governor has full descretionary powers to make any move he wishes."

"Is this what the Americans might call a 'shoot first and ask questions later', law?"

Jeremy smiled. "Yes, that is an apt description."

"Well, if the Governor's secret plan to deal with Dornfield should fail, could you for example drop in on Dornfield's office on Wednesday morning and demand to read his paper in advance? Is this law strong enough to allow you to censor his paper?"

Jeremy was astounded. He never tried to under-estimated Mr. Stanfield, but this was a brilliant suggestion, although the repercussions fall-out might be horrendous. The Governor took the initiative.

"That is a most interesting concept Minister. I must admit it had not occured to us. Yes, I like that and I will check with London to see what their interpretation of the broad security powers might be."

"In my history classes, continued Stanfield "I learned during World War Two the American and British governments frequently told the newspapers they could not print certain reports or stories. All in the interest of national security. I would hope the same might apply here."

"I will call you with an answer as soon as I have it," responded the Governor.

"Hopefully you will not use your tapped telephone to do so!" beamed a toothy Smythe. Everyone in the room broke out in laughter.

-30

Where is Karen?
How about Jess?

Chapter 20

Avery's departure from the Conner complex had been with mixed signals. Emotionally drained from the confrontation over responsibility for the wire tapping, he knew it would be some time before either would drop their guard around the other. This ate at him. He was now certain his friend had no prior knowledge of the tapping, and he willingly eliminated her as a suspect. There remained a short list of possible people; he would consider each carefully before contacting Governor Burnside.

'If only I could find one shred of evidence directly linking any of the people on this list to the tapping!' he thought to himself. Dornfield was his personal favorite, but not really likely. Luscious Lane was the top contender simply because all of the pieces fit. What was it he had been told about her sexual escapades?

'Patricia Pratt told of an occasion when she stumbled into a hotel room at the Island Princess to discover Luscious draped on a bed across four men; all ministers of government. She was naked, they in various stages of undress. Two of the men were inside of her; one in the conventional way, one to her mouth. The other two were snuggled to her breasts and her moving hands had a firm hold on the private parts of each.'

Avery was stunned with this account and for days he tried to picture in his own mind how four men could simultaneously position themselves about a woman in such a format and not run into one another in obstructive ways. He had never worked it out in his mind, but didn't question nurse-Pratt's description. 'Larry Harvey was one of those ministers,' he recalled sadly.

Avery's truck was heading for his shopping center, coming up on Susie

Turn road. To his right the office building for Cable and Wireless with a pay phone in front. One of the suspects was at the phone; Benjamin Dornfield seemed married to the instrument as Avery passed. Since Dornfield's own legal and financial problems with the telephone company, this pay phone had become his second office. Avery knew Dornfield's in-office phone only accepted incoming calls; the telephone company trusted him for $18 per month for an instrument plus inward bound service; but not for outward bound calls. At least not until he paid them off for his past debt, with interest; that was the ruling of the court. It gnawed at Avery this seemingly bright man was so incapable of working within the system; any system. 'What happened to that man' he pondered 'to cause him to be so automatically against anything and everything; was he always like this?'

Passing the Stop 'N Shop Market, Avery's thoughts turned to another man who seemed to have changed in recent years; attorney Charles Scott. 'When he came here as our first attorney, we were good friends' he recalled fondly. 'Then as other attorneys arrived, Scott changed. Since the 1988 election, he has been acting like a man possessed; there is a demon inside of him; I wonder why?'

A plan was forming in Avery's mind. The quickest marketplace for hot information, gleaned from telephone taps, would be the attorneys in town. The real estate people were a close second since an hour's lead time on a competitor often made the difference between sale and being too late. He had close friends in both professions. 'Which one could I call upon and expect truthful answers?'he pondered.

The truck pulled to a stop in front of his own shopping center complex. Two law firms rented here from him; one he used extensively for his own

work, the second he held in high regard. He selected the latter for his first stop; Morgan and Stenbeck.

The heavy set black lady, in her 30s, dressed in a double knit dress that would be appropriate in downtown Philadelphia at a cosmetic counter, saw him push open the door and walk towards her. She could not recall the last time Avery Burgess entered the office of her employer; even if he was the landlord.

"Why Mr. Burgess, what a pleasant surprise! Don't tell me our rent check is late."

Avery returned a nervous smile. He didn't appreciate the dig and never personally collected rent; that's why he had his son Alton.

"Mr. Mayfield ... is Richard in his office?"

"Yes, I'll see if he can meet you." She turned to the intercom line on the telephone, pushed a button and responded. "Avery Burgess is here to see you." She paused and repeated the name. "That's right, Avery Burgess." She paused again and hung up the phone. "Mr. Mayfield will be out shortly; please have a seat."

Avery's friendship with Mayfield was all professional. The attorney had handled some land acquisitions in the past which interested Avery; one in particular involved the American entertainer Dick Clark. Avery was fascinated with the show business people who had begun to discover his island in 1988; each year brought a new crop of well known, and not so well known, entertainment personalities to Portobello. Mayfield was the junior, name-not-yet-on-the-door partner for the firm that still maintained its headquarters on Grand Turk. The senior partner, Roland Morgan, was the country's first, and still sole, native attorney. Roland was also the

brother to Manuel Morgan, the young politician who had taken over control of Avery's former political party, the NDC. Avery placed Mayfield's professionalism above all of these unfortunate ties with native intrigue.

"Avery, what a nice surprise; how are you?" asked Mayfield warmly as he appeared from behind a closed door. The two men shook hands and Mayfield used his hands to punctuate his next statement.

"Please, come into my office." Avery followed him through the door and closed it behind himself.

To practice law in the Turks and Caicos Islands, an attorney must have credentials from someplace else within the British system. Some of the attornies in the country came from Ireland, many others from Canada. Mayfield was an exception; he was English and he also held a bar certificate from the State of Florida. Avery refreshed his memory of the attorney's legal credentials by studying the certificates framed on the wall. He had yet to say a word since Mayfield appeared at the doorway.

"Is this a business visit?" pried Mayfield.

"Yes, and you may bill me if you choose," answered Avery with a wide grin.

Mayfield returned the smile and motioned to the chair. "Please sit down." 'If Avery brings business, any of his business, here,' he thought to himself 'I will be a very happy man.'

"As your client, this is a protected conversation?" began Avery.

Mayfield's face lit up and his heart beat increased. "Of course."

"Good. Let's talk about telephones."

Mayfield's face turned into a quizzical scowl. "Telephones?"

"Yes, the tapping of telephones. I'm sure you heard of the problems Cable and Wireless has with telephone tapping?"

Mayfield had heard about little else since arriving in his office this day. Several of his clients were worried how they might deal with the reports. Some were already concerned transcriptions of telephone calls might appear in court and asked him how he could quash such evidence since it would violate their own privacy. His law firm also represented Barclays Bank in local matters and the Grand Turk bank manager had been buzzing in his ear since sun-up.

"Oh, telephone tapping. You believe your phones have been tapped?" In the back of Mayfield's mind was the germ of an idea; a class action suit against Cable and Wireless for invasion of privacy. 'If Avery began such a suit, others would quickly join in...' he speculated.

"Perhaps they have been tapped. But that is not my reason for the visit. I am wondering what you might know about the information that was being sold; the information learned from the taps."

Mayfield's eyes darted from the direct stare of Avery. 'So that's it; he is after the person who ran the operation.'

"You mean the business aspect of the tapping? Are you asking me if I know who is selling the information?"

Avery set his jaw and folded his hands before his face, leaning forward towards Mayfield. "Yes, I want to know who was behind this, on this island. Who was selling information?"

"I see. And why do you think I might know?"

Avery laughed aloud; an unconscious release of the building tension. "You are one of the better, more skilled attorneys here. Your clients are the best of the best. And I feel that if someone were selling information, your office might at some time have been approached by this person."

"To buy information?"

"Yes."

Mayfield pushed on the floor with his left foot, spinning the chair away from Avery's head-on stare. Now he fixed his eyes on the wall filled with his own credentials.

"This is a very delicate situation," he began. "If you were the Attorney General sitting here, I would be bound as an officer of the court to share my information; if I had any. Unless of course it was my own client who was likely to be guilty of this act." He was playing for time, trying to decide what if anything he could share with Burgess. He might not have another opportunity to swing some of Burgess's business into his office again soon. 'If it were anyone but Avery Burgess, I'd tell him to leave,' he thought to himself.

"Why are you interested in this subject?" he asked.

"A fair question. The answer is very complex. Shall we say I am afraid of what I don't know, and I don't wish to be caught unprepared when the guilty party's identity finally does come out."

Mayfield relaxed and turned back to face Avery.

"I see. And you undoubtedly have a few suspects in mind?"

"Yes."

"Will you share those names with me?" Mayfield and other attornies he had talked with this afternoon already agreed who the guilty party would be; he had learned from his fellow attornies the same person had approached many of them and some in fact had done business.

"And if I do?"

"Well, let me say that between the other attornies I have spoken with

today, there is unaminous agreement as to who the guilty party might be. And frankly, I am surprised the Attorney General has thus far contacted none of us. However, I do understand he is expected over here tomorrow."

"I ask again, 'and if I do?'."

It was now clear to Mayfield Avery could and would obtain the name someplace else, and very shortly. He didn't understand why Avery came to see him at all, but this was an opportunity...

"If you give me the correct name, I will not deny that name."

"If I give you an incorrect name...?"

"I will deny."

Avery placed both hands on the glass covered desk before him and gently moved a pad of paper to the side. He would test Mayfield.

"Benjamin Dornfield?"

Mayfield shot back quickly. "No, I deny."

Avery took an extra breath.

"Pauline Conner?"

Mayfield was stunned into silence. 'Pauline Conner?' he repeated to himself. 'Why in the world would Avery...?'

"No, I deny."

There was an unhideable release from Avery's lungs and a smile spread over his face. Mayfield noticed.

"Charles Scott?"

Now Mayfield had his own release; a nervous laugh. He had avoided talking with Scott on this matter all day for he too feared a Scott connection.

"No, I deny."

Avery resumed his position with both hands squarely on the desk. His back

straightened up and his legs twitched. Mayfield guessed this was the real name coming.

"Luscious...Lane?"

"You have been testing me, right?"

"Perhaps. And Mrs. Lane?"

"I do not deny that name."

Avery broke into a smile. 'I have never had anything to do with that woman' raced through his mind; 'there can be no dangerous fall-out from her being arrested.' He said nothing.

"Now, what do you intend to do?" asked Mayfield. "Have you considered a suit against Cable and Wireless for invasion of your privacy?"

Avery said nothing for a minute; Mayfield allowed him to think his own thoughts. 'I have dropped the hook into the water...'

Finally he did speak. "Yes, the thought has crossed my mind. At the moment I have no decision on this; I don't really know any of my lines were tapped."

"But if they were...?"

"Then I will come back to talk with you. You say the AG is coming here tomorrow?"

"That's what I understand. You know, tomorrow is the ~~last~~ first day of the New year?"

"Yes, I'm sure the AG would much rather be doing something else with holidays coming."

Mayfield would try one more time. "Do you happen to know who represents Mrs. Lane?"

"No, I have no idea..."

"It just happens to be Charles Scott," and he leaned back in his own chair and crossed his arms on his chest.

Avery smiled. "Scott is a workaholic; I'm sure he won't mind working over the holidays!"

Both men laughed as Avery rose to leave.

Mayfield reached the door first and just before opening it turned abruptly to face Avery who was standing immediately behind his shoulder.

"I won't be billing you for this time, but I would like the opportunity to handle some of your business."

"I do appreciate your time, and honesty, with me. Yes, I think our present arrangements may be burdening the firm upstairs," motioning with his hand towards the competitor he now used. "I'll speak with you after the holidays."

Both men shook hands and Avery slipped through the doorway to his shopping center mall outside the law firm entrance. He looked at his watch; 5 PM.

...

Polly had stood by the back door to her house watching Avery's truck disappear down the long driveway behind the row of Papaya trees. Her heart was pounding and without realizing it both hands wound the yellow sun dress into a knot in front of her pelvis.

Lannie stayed away from the house while Avery was visiting but was also watching him depart from her own doorway in the Annex. Now she walked towards the main house. Polly did not notice the maid until she spoke.

"I change sheets now?" she asked.

Polly's hands relaxed their grip on the dress leaving a perspiration

stained knot behind. She slid both hands down her thighs to dry the palms.

"What? Oh, yes, Lannie." Polly's head was overflowing with thoughts. 'I wonder where Shawn is right now? I must get him out of the bedroom!'

"Lannie, straighten up my office and then change the sheets. And I won't need you for dinner tonight. You can do the dishes in the morning."

Lannie liked the sound of this; a night off!

"Yes, Miss Polly."

"One more thing, make the bed with the dark green silk sheets and use the white comforter."

"Yes Miss Polly, the white..." Lannie could not recall being instructed to use the white comforter since...'since Mr. Bill die.'

Polly turned, pointing herself at the bedroom. Lannie followed through the outside door, heading to the office at the opposite end of the house.

The door to the bathroom slid open slowly before Polly's hands. The shower stall curtain still dripped with water, a once-fluffy towel tossed to the floor. Polly tiptoed past the crumpled Fieldcrest and peered silently around the corner into the bedroom. Shawn's naked body lay before her; his head closest, the face away. Her eyes swept from his tossled light brown hair down a sprouting chest and across the flat stomach. And then froze.

She imagined Shawn's eyes to be closed and vainly she supposed him to be fantasizing about her. Both palms were gyrating backwards and forward on either side of a very taunt penis. She had watched many men masturbate, often at her request. Her fascination with what she now saw was overpowering, and for the instant Lannie's coming to change the sheets was forgotten.

Shawn's knees were bent slightly; his toes gyrating to a rhythem of their

own. Now he began to moan softly and his neck became rigid jerking the face abruptly straight at the ceiling. Polly now verified the eyes were shut and noticed his tongue moving feverishly across moistened lips.

Her mind's emotion caressed her body; Polly's own groin ached, the heart pounded beneath her sun dress. An intimate wetness was soaking her panties as droplets formed at the boundary of cotton and inner thigh. Impulsively raising a hand to her mouth teeth sunk into skin to silence the cry forming at the base of her throat.

Two sounds washed over her nearly in unison. Shawn's knees bolted rigid as his toes lept into the air; both legs locked together by an invisible force originating deep within his body. "Oh Polly!" he shrieked, the hands withdrawing from the penis, droplets of prescious white fluid scattering across his lower chest and abdomen. Instinctively, Polly's torso was coiling to bound onto the bed where she could hold him tightly while sucking the sperm from his body. And there came a second, just slightly delayed, sound breaking without warning against her eardrums.

"Miss Polly, I come change sheets now."

The doorknob rotated and the door opened a crack. Polly's arm shot from her mouth to the doorframe, her fingers clutching the edge of the door and pushing against Lannie's strong thrust.

"Not now Lannie. Never mind, I will change the sheets myself!" Polly now had the door under control and was pushing it shut.

Shawn bolted from the bed, stumbled and fell to the floor in a tense heap. Polly had turned her body to secure the door with her own back and suddenly realized the bed was empty.

Her fear turned to puzzlement; he was gone where seconds before his

glistening body was framed in royal blue silk. She called out, softly.

"Shawn! Shawn? Where are you?"

Four fingers appeared on the edge of the silk covered mattress; then the top of his young head. Slowly, a forehead and two brown eyes peeked above the field of silken blue.

Polly's disturbed face turned to relief as the head slowly emerged from below the blue horizon. Behind her back, two hands still firmly grasping the door knob groped for the locking button. She felt the familiar snap of the lock just as Shawn's chest rose above the silk margin.

Instinctively she knew he must be frightened and confused. His after-climax daze had been snapped by disturbing sounds and she now realized he had tumbled to the floor to hide, and in fear.

"Aunt Polly?" He made no attempt to correct himself.

She ran around the bed dropping to the floor beside his naked body, tenderly gripping in her hands the face and softly stroking temple and cheeks. He began to sob and Polly realized for the first time how fragile and immature his sense of emotions must be.

"I was so frightened..." he wailed; "I was alone and then suddenly I heard a noise and saw the door opening... "

Her hands lifted his face to her own and she traced a circle around his lips with the point of her tongue. Through the sun dress she could feel her own wetness and the clumps of his wet sperm now mingling on the surface of her skin. Polly's mind convulsed through 25 years of being close, intimate, with dozens, perhaps a hundred men. There had never been a sensation such as this. She imagined actually being inside of Shawn's body, her sensual tongue became his penis and she was simultaneously fighting to gain release from

inside of his body, and resisting leaving the pleasureful place.

They held one another tightly for nearly five minutes; gradually Shawn's sobbing subsided, and then her own. When mind and body separated, the body had slowly slumped to the floor and his had followed to lay partly on, partly next to hers.

The sensation of being inside of Shawn's body gradually receded; Polly's mind resisted the depature for as long as she could hold onto the feeling. When at last it was gone, she reached for his limp hand and took it in her own. Slowly she moved it from where it lay to between her legs. Even in her out-of-body mind-state, she had been conscious his penis was soft and ill prepared for a sexual encounter. Now, against her thigh and through her dress she felt it suddenly grow erect and hard as his finger tips lightly came into contact with her soaked panties ~~just above the vagina~~ near.

Shawn's body tightened as if prodded by an electrical shock. His free arm moved to grip the front of her sundress, ripping so violently the cloth split at both seams falling towards her waist. His powerful fingers now found the ~~topless~~ strapless bra; he yanked again virtually disintegrating the wire stays. Polly experienced a momentary flash of pain across the rib cage perimeter as the elastic cut deeply into skin until the snaps at the rear broke free.

Her legs submissively swung apart in estatic anticipation at the same instant his right hand shredded her panties in a single motion. Polly's body moved to a familiar position below his as he rammed his penis inside of her with a single thrust that drove their pubic hair to intertwine. Now his left hand grabbed the top of her head and shook it vigorously while her lips searched for his mouth.

All they found was the top of the head; his long hair caught in her teeth. Shawn's lips had found her breast and his teeth were gnawing a pathway to the nipple. Between thumb and forefinger he held the aching papilla firmly, squeezing and releasing it in cadence to his long thrusts.

Polly's mind was once more on a confusing journey; this time she imagined her tongue was inside a vagina, her own, facing the opening with eyes at its' tip. With each thrust of his penis she visualized the head racing towards her, and saw it wrapping itself around her tongue.

His teeth bit into her breast either side of the nipple and his tongue coated it with saliva. She felt pain in her breast and a savage dash of energy to her vagina. Shawn's mouth and teeth pulled back from her breast without warning and his back shot rigid. In her mind she saw lumps of white seed suffocating the tip of her tongue. Both screeched the opposite name in harmony. And then silence, and no motion whatsoever from either body. They would lay in this position, virtually motionless, for more than an hour.

...

Avery Burgess stood pensively in front of Morgan and Stenbeck for several minutes, pondering his next move. A sizeable crush of food shoppers was jammed in front of check out stands in his grocery store at the far end of the open arcade. Through the melee he could see his son Alton bent over an electronic cash register. This jarred his memory; Alton's trip to hand deliver the Paul Monasto statement to Governor Burnside had been postponed in the frenzy of the day's activities.

'Perhaps I can give the statement to the AG tomorrow' he thought to himself. He began to walk, slowly, towards the grocery store when a voice behind him called his name.

"Avery...Avery Burgess?"

He stopped walking but did not turn, testing his own skill at recognizing a voice. It was male, and familiar. Obviously white.

A slight figure with long hair entered the periphery of his vision. He instantly knew it to be Paul. Avery half turned with hand extended.

"Why it's Paul; I was just thinking about you."

"I have been trying to find you all afternoon."

Avery thought the man looked exceptionally nervous and he glanced about quickly to see who might be within earshot. There was no-one.

"Let's go over here, in the corner, and talk," Avery suggested, placing a hand on the smaller man's shoulder.

"Something has happened?" asked Paul. "Something involving Harvey?"

Avery was determined to confine Paul's information to a bare minimum. He glanced about again, concerned they even be seen conversing in public at this stage.

"Yes, a great deal has happened. It appears Mr. Harvey has fled the country; apparently some of his business deals caught up with him over the weekend."

Paul's foot kicked at the tiled floor, his toe rubbing over the shiney surface. "I guess...I mean, what does that do to our deal?"

Avery could see Paul was afraid to ask whether they still had a deal. He tried to reassure him.

"Paul, Harvey's disappearence will have no major affect on our agreement. Except, I doubt you will be required to leave the country at all, now. But Harvey left behind quite a mess and I don't think we'll know where all the pieces fit until, say ... Saturday?" He was not certain how long it would

take, but recalled the Monastos were scheduled to move to the Whitebourn house Friday. And with the New Year's holiday upon them, it would be the following week before business activity resumed a normal pace.

"So I just stay away from Harvey's shop here?"

Avery thought, 'No, perhaps Paul should report each morning unless he was told to stay away.'

"The manager...Gonzalez, is that his name?"

"Gonzalez. He seems to have left the country as well; some workmen at the shop told me this morning he had gone to the Dominican Republic."

"Gonzalez; that would be Dominican alright. When is he expected back?"

"That's the funny part; I got the impression he might not come back. Is that business finished? What's happened?"

Avery knew nothing was to be gained from sharing very much with Paul. The best he could do was reassure the man.

"I suspect Harvey's total business empire has collapsed. He probably won't be back soon. Fortunately for you and Karen, other plans have been made and if you will just be patient until say next week, you will both be working again."

Paul relaxed. Those were the words he wanted to hear.

"So back to the beach!"

Avery smiled back. "Yes, but check with me daily even if only to say hello; OK?"

Paul reached to shake his hand. Avery was caught off guard; a handshake in public at the end of a conversation usually met a deal had been struck. He didn't want anyone to notice this gesture. His own right hand went out towards Paul but went above the waiting hand to the man's shoulder. He

gently squeezed the shoulder bone.

"Stay in touch!" and Avery turned to walk to the grocery store.

...

Governor Martin Burnside had just finished dinner and was settling into his favorite bedroom chair to watch the BBC evening newscast as relayed via satellite on a delayed basis to Australia. Mindy called upstairs...

"Martin, your hot line is ringing!"

An extension of the line was in the bedroom; the ringer turned off. He hesitated answering but decided it might be his AG.

"Yes?" He remained squeemish to use this line, although engineer Brown now assured him all lines were safe. One disadvantage of using this extension was the scrambler was downstairs and could not be activated from the bedroom.

"Avery Burgess here; shall we ... scramble?"

"I'm afraid...oh hold on just a moment." Setting the phone down he now began the tedious effort of changing phones. He had to walk downstairs and pick up the primary instrument, activate the scrambler, and then ask Mindy or John to return to the upstairs phone and hang up.

At the base of the stairs he spied John reading in the library. "Son, will you please go back to the bedroom and hang up the hot line phone? I am picking it up in the office."

The youngster waved a salute and laid his book down.

The office phone in his hand, he reached for the scrambler button.

"Activating," he said into the mouthpiece and pushed the button. The next sound he heard was an abnormally high pitched voice similar to Avery Burgess.

"My scrambler is activated; do you copy."

"Yes Mrs. Burgess, I copy."

Both men paused. Avery was hoping the Governor would give him a complete run down of the day's activities. Alas, the Governor had no desire to relive the events of the day. Avery finally spoke and presumed if he was going far afield, the Governor would stop him.

"When the AG is here tomorrow, I will hand him the statement from Paul Monasto. I'm sorry..."

"Who? Paul Monasto?"

"The carpenter who had been hired by Harvey."

The entire event had slid from the Governor's mind but now returned rapidly.

"Oh yes, quite. What else?"

"There is an element in your puzzle still missing; someone you need, to complete the investigation?"

"Yes?"

"I believe I can shorten your search, unless you already know who you are looking for."

The Governor's attention picked up. And he pinched himself mentally for not previously asking Avery about the unknown person. The man knew everything.

"Yes, go on."

"I believe the agent here is a lady; a Luscious Lane. The evidence is overwhelming, and some of her customers have been identified."

The name was familiar to the Governor, but he could not place it.

"I am having trouble ...difficulty placing the name."

Avery beamed with a smile the Governor could not see.

"She...her reputation is similar to Plentiful's reputation..." Avery began.

"Ahhh yes..the wife of our government's favorite architect. If you will pardon my French, I believe they call them 'the architect and the archi-tit'?" and the Governor laughed at his own brashness.

Avery was stunned but laughed also. In the two years he had known the man, this was the first time he had ever heard an off-color comment.

"Well, is this solid information?" he began again.

"Very solid; verified through the local legal community."

"I hope we are not forced to take that to court!" and he laughed again. "A more scurrilous crew never walked the plank..." and the Governor was laughing out of control. His laughter attracted Mindy who appeared at the door.

She hadn't seen him in such good humour since this mess began and after assuring herself he was alright, carefully left the doorway without attracting his attention.

Avery was laughing because the Governor was laughing but with less intensity. 'Is he so pleased' he pondered 'because he feared it might have been someone else? Who could he have suspected that so worried him?'

"Well, now" Martin began again, "that brings me to another matter; Benjamin Dornfield. I planned to call you in the morning about him; you realize his newspaper reports could be very alarming on this matter."

Avery tried to see where the Governor was headed. 'Is he hopeful of controlling damaging stories in the paper which might undermine investor confidence in the islands?'

"What is it you fear about Dornfield, this time?" he asked.

"His past performance tells us when he writes about this incident, the reports will skillfully blend official pronouncements with innuendos and partial truths gleaned from the tom-tom circuit. And he hates Cable and Wireless. I can see no good coming from his next newspaper."

"And you would like to stop the next issue?"

"What I would like, and what I will achieve are two different things. I will settle for his only publishing the official statements, but I believe it will take a special effort. I hoped you could help."

Avery's influence with Dornfield was virtually nil, as the Governor well knew. ' So why would he ask me for help?'

"Do you have specific help in mind?"

"Actually, no. But I have reason to believe there is a person on Portobello who can help; someone owed a debt by Dornfield. Do you know what I am suggesting?"

Avery felt he was being tested. Dornfield weekly used the editorial pages of his newspaper to help native business people. He fought political battles behind the shroud of letters-to-the-editor signed by fictitous pen names. Dornfield was the champion of the native blacks; but mostly he fought for black patronage. A wide swath of black Turks and Caicos islanders thought they owed Dornfield something.

"I could list dozens, maybe hundreds who think they owe him something. And I suppose someplace out there are a few who feel Dornfield owes them; for a news tip, a bit of juicy gossip. But I can't see how this will help here..."

The Governor was also testing. He had reason to believe one specific

person on Portobello had saved Dornfield's shakey financial world within the past year; a 5 or 6 figure dollar number to be exact. But if he tipped his hand, the Governor would betray a banker's confidence; this he would not do.

"What I have in mind is someone who advanced funds to Dornfield, bought into his business perhaps. Someone to whom I suspect he reports routinely for approval or disapproval. Does that help?"

Something clicked in Avery's mind. 'What was it I heard today when Dornfield's name came up? Somebody defending the man?' Where was he when he heard it, he pondered. Mayfield's office? No, it was Pauline! She had defended him as a suspect in the telephone tapping case. 'Didn't she call him Ben?' Virtually nobody, certainly no white, ever called Dornfield Ben. He had never considered it before; maybe there was a relationship between Ben and Pauline? 'Here I go again, suspecting my friend!' he thought. The pain of the afternoon with Pauline returned to his mind.

"Avery...are you still there?"

"Oh, yes. I was thinking about what you said. To be quite frank, I so dislike the man I perhaps purposefully avoid knowing very much about who backs him and who does not. But now that you mention it, there might be somebody here who has helped him financially."

The Governor had no doubt of the backing; his banking sources found it amusing that a sizeable check from a certain Portobello business woman had been deposited into Dornfield's account. The Governor knew enough about the person writing the check to believe that if funds had changed hands, the private backer now had certain persuasive powers over the newspaper editor. The seed planted in Avery's mind, it was time to move to the next plateau. He was not convinced Avery didn't know all about it anyhow.

"Perhaps you could bring this matter to the attention of, someone, there? Let me tell you again what I would like; it would be best if Dornfield's coverage of this matter was restricted to just the basic facts. It would be best if Mr. Harvey was not included in the same story. It would be better if there was no suggestion Cable and Wireless has been negligent." The Governor paused to sip on a glass of water.

Avery understood.

"In other words, Dornfield's story should not make our islands look bad."

"Precisely. I'm certain you would agree neither the present or next generation of investors would be overjoyed to think we routinely went about tapping telephones and sharing confidential information. And Avery...?"

"Yes?"

"I really need this assurance by tomorrow noon, for political reasons. If you have difficulty getting that assurance, please let me know so I can take alternate steps."

"Yes, I see. This is a difficult matter. I'm not sure it can be done."

"Worth a shot, yes?"

"Yes. Anything else?

The Governor nodded as if he was facing Avery. "I think not. Until tomorrow?"

"Yes, good night."

And two scrambler buttons were pushed simultaneously, some 75 miles apart.

...

For forty-five minutes Polly's mind had danced between full sleep and frenetic slumber. Each time she drifted off, visions of massive sperm clots

packing the eyes planted at the end of her tongue awoke her. The dream repeated each time she drifted off and reawoke her. For the last 15 minutes she had lain motionless beneath Shawn measuring his breathing against her own and anticipating the all too infrequent throbs of his penis. It amazed her his tool remained hard and firm inside nearly an hour after his climax. 'He will make many women very happy in his lifetime,' she thought.

Now she was toying with her own plans for the young man. 'It is Monday evening; we have all day Tuesday, and, Wednesday. At 2 PM Thursday I must take him to the airport.'

'If I am his first real female partner, how will he handle this new sensation when he returns to school? Will he so miss me that he turns to others?' Fidelity to her was not an issue. That he might lose sight of why he was in college and mistake sex as a replacement for preparing for the business world; that was a concern. 'Aunt Polly will need to talk frankly with him, that's all there is to that!' she decided.

There was another more immediate concern. Inspite of the fury of their love making, she detected no signs within her body of abrasion or pain. She had suffered more than once at the hands and penis of an insensitive man nearly ripping her apart. But what about Shawn? 'When he awakes I must wash and inspect him; any sign of rubbed skin or redness and he gets my salve treatment. He has to last until Thursday at 2!'

Shawn's body moved beneath her; the first significant movement since his final thrust had left them welded together as one. Polly was abruptly aware his back appeared to be under tension; the last thrust remained deeply inside of her. 'I doubt even a sheet of paper could be slid between his pelvic bone and my own' she calculated.

I thought she was beneath him?

Polly's experience also warned that inspite of his youth, he would soon be drained of sperm. 'He may be insatiable for now, but by this time tomorrow he could lose interest in this if he has dry ejaculations.' She had long desired to try a native remedy for low sperm production one of the agency girls confided to her. As best she could recall, the native men were said to take the mucus membrane from the Conch animal and carefully separate it from the conch meat. They then dried the mucus into a dry stem which was subsequently pounded into powder. The powder was taken with coconut milk and according to enthusiastic native reports, a man's sperm was replenished within hours.

'When he awakes, the second order of business, right after I wash and inspect his penis, will be to call around for some powder!'

Shawn's body moved again. The room was all but totally dark; only a thin shaft of moonlight waifed in a partially cracked louvered window above them. His hand stirred near her waist and crept slowly up her rib cage. Fingertips reached the lower crease of her right breast, venturing slowly up out of the crease to search for her nipple. Forefinger and thumb found the prey and rubbed gently.

"Aunt Polly...are you awake?"

...

Chapter 21

Benjamin Dornfield faced several problems. New Year's day was his first problem. It fell on a Tuesday, tomorrow to be precise. And Tuesday was his regular day to complete typesetting for that week's edition of his newspaper. Tuesday night was his habitual paste up night; with tens of feet of photo offset gallies pinned on the walls of his small office, he would sit at his drafting table and cut and fit pieces together to prepare the flats for his newspaper. Then on Wednesday mornings he made last minute changes and additions before meeting the Pan American flight at 2 PM to send off or himself carry off the flats to his Miami printer. Thousands of copies of his newspaper would return to the islands on the Pan American Friday flight if everything worked properly; Saturday if there were glitches.

Dornfield could operate each piece of equipment in his lightly equipped office; including the photo typesetter. But he couldn't set type and do paste up at the same time. And his Dominican lady typesetter had disappeared without notice this morning. She left for the DR with her husband and Benjamin had nothing but a terse hand scrawled note to explain the unscheduled departure. It read:

'We are leaving; will advise. Maria Gonzalez'

The New Year's edition of his newspaper was traditionally the second largest of the year. Borrowing a trick from American news magazines, Dornfield annually used this issue to review the news highlights of the just-past year. He financed this documentation of Turks and Caicos history by hustling advertisements from local businesses whom he convinced to thank customers for the patronage of the past year. It all added up to extra work and tonight he was a one-arm paper hanger drowning beneath a sea of typeset

gallies and hand drawn, unfinished advertising layouts.

His second problem was the weekend news stories. His intelligence network told him the fire in the apartment, the death of Samuel Stubbs and the Chief Minister's revelations about Cable and Wireless were inter-related. He felt he had the story figured out, but he was sure there was as much he didn't know or suspect as there was out in the open. The opportunity to crucify his hated foe Cable and Wireless was flashing like a blinding neon sign suspended before his eyes. The chance to drive additional nails into the coffin of the ruling GDP was just as bright and exciting. The role of the British government in all of this was even more challenging. 'Why' he wondered 'was the AG himself on Portobello Sunday taking charge of the mop up operations for the fire, and Stubbs' death?' He was self-convinced there was an important story here; a story involving all of the groups and entities he most hated. He might never again soon have the opportunity to blast them all in one startling review.

Which brought him back to the original problem; time and personnel. He needed help, right now; this very minute. Professional help. But where, on Portobello?

Dornfield had spent more than an hour standing in the cool afternoon air using the pay phone in front of the Cable and Wireless office. It was humulating for him to stand there using their pay phone to place his calls. He was there so often over the course of an average week that he was constantly explaining to people why the hated Cable and Wireless would not allow him to have a regular phone, like a normal business person. It didn't increase his stature in the community to not have a business telephone on which he could place calls.

One of his afternoon calls had been to retired newsperson Luscious Lane. Lane had been a partner in the 1980 launch of a monthly Turks and Caicos Islands four color news magazine. The magazine failed but the lady still knew her way around type setting equipment and paste up. She was not an especially close friend of Dornfield but he was desperate. Luscious had said 'no', something about a new year's party she and James were throwing. But there had been a suggestion; a new arrival on the island staying at Burgess's Golden Shores was reputed to have journalism experience. He had the name someplace in his pocket, a lady, but no time to go looking for the prospect.

Several of his calls had been in vain to a special person he only looked to for help in a real emergency. In the year of their association, she had provided him with funds to pay off his Florida printer and catch up on payments to his office equipment supplier. Without her help, his newspaper would have folded nearly 12 months ago. Three calls, no answers. He took this as an omen that he would have to work this problem out on his own. 'Besides' he thought 'a meeting with her never lasts a short while; I might lose the rest of the day ... and night, if I go out there!'

And the last straw. Because of the hated Cable and Wireless, calls could only come in to him; he could place no calls, not even local calls. So where he might be able to follow up leads on the major weekend news stories and simultaneously paste up his flats if his phone worked, he was essentially cut off from the outside world. Unless somebody called him, he was a prisoner in his own office. It was 7 PM Monday December 31st; and Benjamin Dornfield was not a happy man. He was all alone, hungry, and tired.

...

When Avery Burgess hung up with the Governor he pondered the request for assistance he had just received. Sitting alone in his home complex office, a dull 40-watt bulb lit a corner of his desk. He liked sitting in the near darkness of this building; for some reason it took him back to his youth on North Caicos where as a boy he would sit on the rocks at Sandy Point and wait for the sun to disappear into the ocean to the west.

A lad of ten or twelve, he dreamed of following the sun around the world and pondered the possibility of racing like the sun to completely circle the world in a single 24 hour period. Now the setting sun held a different meaning; one less day remained in his life span. Although he came from family roots where most of the men lived into their mid 80s, he didn't expect his own life would be that long. 'They were hearty people who lived on the purities of the world; fish from the sea, water from the skies, crops from the earth' he often said to his own children. 'We are paying a price for being a part of the modern world; if the stress doesn't kill us, the chemicals will.' And he believed this.

The stress of this day was taking its toll. His knees ached; a symptom, he believed, of derisive inter-human relationships. 'I have had my share this day,' he thought. 'My blood is racing and my arteries are clogged from all of those chemicals I consume; so my knees hurt.' In Avery's mind, it was just that simple.

"The Governor," he said aloud. "He wants me to contact some person who has advanced money to Dornfield and ask that person to see that Dornfield's news story about the weekend events won't damage this country's fragile reputation." His massive hands went to his cheek bones and fingertips laid against temples. He knew he needed help in this matter.

Pushing his chair backwards with his feet Avery painfully struggled from the chair's cushion and slowly lowered himself to his knees. Then he pulled his chair back to use as a platform for his elbows. Facing west he laid his face into the cradle formed by his hands and began to pray.

"Dear Lord ... I am faced with a crisis. I am being asked to approach my dearest friend in this land to ask her to betray a confidence I have no right to learn. My friend is not a perfect human being, but she is entitled to her own life and her own views. If I do this, I may lose this friend forever; I dare not risk that.

"Dear Lord my country faces a crossroad. We are presently governed by ungodly people who have no credentials to govern. We are presently ruled by the last vestiges of a colonial system which has died and been buried elsewhere in this world more than a decade ago.

"Lord, you have spoken to me and you have told me it will be my duty and my responsibility to lead this country out of the trappings of colonialism and away from the stupidity of unworthy leaders. And I have asked you when this might fall on me, and you have told me I will know the time when it is near.

"Lord, is this the right time? If it is, please give me a sign. Place a star in the sky as you did in Jerusalem, shake my home with your fury, send a storm to our shores.

"If this is not the right time, I will know because you have sent me no sign. And I will go to my dearest friend and I will do the Governor's bidding.

"I ask your guidance in Jesus's name, dear Lord. Amen."

...

Seven hundred miles to Avery's west-northwest on Florida's east coast NASA was in the final seconds of countdown for the much delayed launch of a military payload satellite. The 'KH-13', the latest in a long series of sophisticated spying devices inaugerated under President Eisenhower, was planned for geo-stationary orbit some 22,300 miles above the equator over the Indian Ocean. Once on station, this 3,000 pound structure would 'be able to see hair growing on the face of a middle eastern leader,' as the head of the American CIA boasted privately.

For six weeks NASA had been embarassed repeatedly by mischievious hydrogen line leaks and electronic control malfunctions in the sub-frame operation computers in the package. Tonight, it finally looked like a go.

"Four...three...two...and we have lift off!" Even the metallic voice of the count down engineer carried emotion. NASA's very credibility was riding on the tail of this three stage beast.

Just ten miles off the coast of Cape Kennedy a small flotilla of U.S. ships stacked up on full ready status. If the launch was busted in the first 30 seconds after rocket firing, it was the duty of those on board to retrieve the remains of the rocket package and satellite before any foreign navy might do so. Glasnos or no glasnos, six Soviet 'fishing vessels' were stationed within twenty miles of the U.S. Navy ships, their sophisticated communications equipment monitoring every breath and lunge of the huge ICBM capable rocket.

"We have stage one separation..." announced the Cape's public information officer. This time his voice would not appear on the 11 o'clock newscasts because the launch was not public; no news media people had been allowed any closer than the row of hotels along the beach just east of US 1.

...

One of Avery's knees was not cooperating. The left leg wanted to straighten up; the right knee refused to do so. His right hand grasped the edge of his mahogony desk for support and he pulled his left leg closer to the desk to buttress his body. With his right thigh supported by the desk top, he took both hands and guided the uncooperative leg into a straight position. Then gradually he allowed weight to fall on the right leg. It held.

"Thank you Lord," he muttered with a grimmace. Avery had tired of asking The Lord for help with his legs; he now believed they were his cross to bear and he would remind himself when they were especially painful 'This pain can be but a fraction of the pain Jesus suffered on the cross.'

Although the sun had been down for nearly an hour, Avery was drawn outside to stare into the western sky. He knew not why, only that he must do so. His legs began to function again as the knee joints worked and by the time he reached the outside door he was moving at normal speed. He turned left and walked to stand next to the hastily contrived diving platform. To his northwest a faint glow in the sky was moving towards the east-southeast at breakneck speed. 'A jet,' he thought to himself and he fixed his eyes on the accelerating dot of light.

...

"And we have stage two ignition!" came the abnormally emotional metallic report of the NASA engineer. Telemetering equipment throughout the complex reported the rocket's second stage had now fired with a burst of energy and light. The bird was 470 miles down range, over the lower Bahamas. Within seconds it would pass directly over the long forgotten Turks and Caicos

Islands leaving behind a brilliant streamer of heated exhaust more than 80 miles above the ocean waters below.

...

The dull glow of the fast moving dot suddenly exploded into brilliant yellow-white streamers centered squarely in the middle of Avery's eyeballs. The speed and strength of the light source told Avery this was no jet airplane. Furthermore it showed every indication of coming straight towards him. He could hear no sound and could not judge its size nor distance. It was a splendorous light coming out of the heavens and even if it did not land at his feet, its path would take it through the heavens directly above his head. Without regard for his knees he dropped the full weight of his body onto the concrete pool deck and clasped his hands together before his face.

"Oh Lord I see the sign! It is the Star you have sent to tell me the time is now!" Avery's body wrenched backwards to find the brilliant star glow again. It's acceleration was so great it now appeared to be directly above his head and moving towards the east at ever increasing speed. Avery's neck strained backward to keep the light focused in the center of his vision and then his back gave away tumbling him to the ground face up. Pain from his crumpled body shot through his sensory system and the last thing he might recall before passing out from pain was the light's dull glow rapidly disappearing behind the roofline of his home.

...

Less than one mile from Avery's complex, to the east along the north shore of Portobello, Luscious Lane prepared six lobster tails for cocktail snacks. Luscious had two rules about life; enjoy everything there is to

enjoy, and don't be afraid to try something new. Her husband James was just popping from the shower in their tiny tin roofed home.

Without bothering to reach for a towel, he tramped from the bathroom through the bedroom to the small kitchen dripping shower water behind him.

"Do you remember the first time we saw each other?" he asked, passing his arms around her terry cloth bathrobe draped body from behind. His right hand immediately headed for the weighty left breast which he rubbed vigorously.

She glanced overhead at the wall mounted clock; '7:15 and the first guests are expected in 30 minutes'.

"How can I forget?" she teased back, swaying her hips against his stomach and lower groin. "It took five minutes for you to cum twice!"

"I forgot my towel. Do you think you could turn around long enough to wrap me inside of your robe and dry me off?"

"I have lobster shell and skin all over my - ohhh! That might be good!" and she spun about quickly pushing the bathrobe ties apart and allowing him to press his wet body against her sun-browned skin.

James never tired of making love to his wife. He was 35 when they met and had never married. In fact, his infrequent affairs until Luscious had been so disappointing his own love life had turned to self gratification at about age 25. (She was the first woman in ten years when they met.) unclear

"Here, I'm going to rub your dick with my hands. That will spread the lobster juices all over. And then I'll lick it off!" she purred. And her hands tip-toed down his chest with gentle fingertip caresses until they reached the hardening cock and pulstating balls.

Every day with Luscious was a new adventure. She loved gin and her favorite early morning trick was to pour gin on his genitals and then

add a fingertip drop of vermouth to the head of his cock. When she planned it in advance, she placed a red candied cherry beneath the flap of skin on his scrotum, sandwiching it against his thigh. Her record was 6 ounces of gin lapped up in 30 minutes time.

He often wished he could remember all of the liquids and solids she had dripped onto or packed around his private parts in three years. He knew that if he lived long enough, and his parts did not wear out, sooner or later everything for sale in the grocery store would end up there.

Now she was reached for the tray of freshly cut up lobster. He moved his own hand as best he could to help her find the tray. Small pieces of lobster popped from the tray and were buried by her fingers in the hair of his groin. After planting several pieces, she began to eat her way through the forest.

She knew how to send James off. First she licked and sucked vigorously along the full of his cock, removing the lobster juices she had first packed there. With the lobster bits buried in his hair, she went after each piece catching his groin hair between her lips and pulling back slowly so he felt the sensation of hair and roots separating. The lobster was tasty and that it was coated with his hair was no deterrent to her pleasure. He stood supporting his back against the closed door of the refrigerator and she had his timing down to a few seconds. It took five pieces of lobster and a gentle final nip at the end of his cock with her lips and tongue for him to explode. She could see his balls tighten and feel the energy surging through the cock. As always, her lips were in the right spot and parted when the tiny drops of white nectar popped from his body.

"Ummm...that is a very tasty combination. I like that!" and she turned

her face to the side pressing against his hairy groin with her cheek while passing her hands around his backside to hold on firmly.

His breathing was heavy but she knew in 30 seconds it would return to normal. She gradually released her hold on his bottom and gently nipped the end of his already deflated cock.

Pushing away from the refrigerator she had some advice.

"Now, you get another quick shower and this time you dry off in there!" pointing to the bedroom. He smiled down at her, on her knees in front of him.

"Oh, one more thing. That was so good...here..." and she jumped back to her feet, turned and picked up the tray of lobster bits.

"Before it is all gone let me milk a little more." In her left hand she held the silver tray filled with lobster pieces. She placed it against his thighs and gently pushed his cock down into the cut up pieces. Her right hand took his tool and stroked it gently. The last few drops of sperm in the now soft penis dribbled out onto the lobster. When she was satisfied the container was empty she patted him on the thigh and sent him off to the shower.

"Let's see how many of our guests rave about my natural sauce on our lobster tid-bits!"

...

Velma Burgess was growing concerned about Avery's absence. It had been two hours since he went across the patio to the office to make a phone call. She stepped outside and realized there were no patio lights on. She also noticed there was no light coming from Avery's office. Her hand went back inside the door to the patio light switch.

Velma didn't notice Avery's slumped body behind the diving platform at first. She had crossed more than halfway to the office door when her eyes were drawn to the diving platform. Her right hand shot to her breast and words flowed from her mouth.

"Oh dear God, Avery...Avery!"

Everything she had learned as a nurse and during nurse's training now flooded her mind. Racing to his crumpled form and bending down she could see his legs were folded beneath him and his back was suspended across the heels of his shoes. She knew instantly his back was under strain and she tried to roll him over gently to pull the legs out.

His pulse seemed normal but the face was soaked with perspiration. Her first concern was 'how long has he been like this?" Avery's breathing was of normal depth but slightly irregular. She lifted the eyelid to inspect the pupils of his eyes. There was no question what to do next.

Racing back into the house she called out "Alton, Alton, come quickly. It is your father. Celia, Celia! Call the clinic for am ambulance, now!"

Both children acknowledged their mother's instructions and Alton nearly ran his mother down in the kitchen. She was heading for her well equipped first-aid cabinet.

"Where is he, in the office? A heart attack?"

"No, out by the diving thing. I don't think it's a heart attack; grab some ice from the freezer... and a towel!"

Velma found a container of medical supplies and raced back to the patio. Alton was directly behind her and Celia only steps behind him.

"Celia, raise his head some more. Alton, finish straightening out his legs and get some ice into this ice pack. I have some ammonia in here ...

someplace" and she was tearing the medical kit apart searching for a small container.

Avery's fingers began to move. His glasses had been knocked to the ground when he fell, he usually wore them only when reading. Nobody saw them in the dark and as Alton bent down with ice his knee landed on the frames. They snapped under his weight but no-one noticed.

Velma now had the cap off of the bottle and was placing some of the liquid on her fingertip.

"Hold the ice pack against his forehead,.just for a few seconds...that's enough. Now take it away." She bent down with her wet finger and rubbed it at the base of his nostrils. Avery reacted immediately; his leg jumped upward and out from his body and his hand went to his head.

"Ice again," Velma urged. She re-wetted her finger and again readied to touch under his nostrils. "Enough ice," and Alton jerked his hand away from his father's forehead. Her fingertip approached Avery's nostrils for a second time.

"What is going on? Where am I?" Avery shouted, both eyes wide open and a look of fear across his face.

"There, there. You are just fine. I found you out here unconscious. Do you remember what happened?"

Avery pushed her hand away with his own and tried to raise his head. Alton's hand followed his head upward and was there to catch it when he fell back towards the ground.

"A star, a ... light...moving through the heavens. It was a sign...a sign just to me..." Avery began. Velma feared the worst; he sounded dilerious. 'Maybe he did have a heart attack; there may be more blood clots...'

She turned to her daughter who now stood behind her with both hands clutching her dress. Tears were streaming down Celia's face.

"The ambulance...did you get one? How long?"

"The doctor...he said he was leaving right away. He asked what happened to daddy...I couldn't tell him...and..."

"OK, make sure the front lights are on. Go inside and fetch me two full sized wool blankets. After you bring them to me, keep an eye out for the ambulance; They can drive right up here to the edge of the patio."

Celia was already running for the house. Alton's hand still supported his father's head and cold water was dripping from the ice-pack bag he held in his other hand.

"Avery, I believe you may have suffered a heart attack. The doctor and the ambulance is on the way. You must be quiet and not try to move. We are all here and we will make you comfortable until the doctor arrives."

Avery shut his eyes and tried to take stock on himself. His knees hurt; they always hurt. He flexed his fingers and then wiggled his toes inside of his shoes. They all moved normally. There was no pain in his chest, his heart felt normal. He did have a slight headache. He knew he should try to tell all of this to Velma; 'she's the nurse in this family' he thought to himself. But no words would form in his vocal cords.

"Water?" Velma was asking him a question. He opened his eyes and looked straight into her eyes. "Water; a small sip of water?"

He moved his lips to speak but nothing came out. Velma took the movement of the lips to indicate he wanted water.

"Alton, I will be right back. Keep your hand under his head."

Velma moved as fast as she could towards the kitchen but Celia appeared

from inside of the house before she reached the doorway.

"The blankets...let me have them. Get your father a glass of tap water, not ice water." Taking the blankets she turned around and again moved as fast as she could back to Avery.

"Alright, the water is coming. I'm going to cover you with a blanket. But we won't try top move you until the doctor gets here."

"Mom, that could be the ambulance; hear the siren?" Alton used his free hand to help his mother arrange the blanket.

'They almost never use the siren' Velma thought; 'I guess being a Burgess counts for something around here.'

Celia was back with the water. "Hand it to your brother. Alton, lift his head just a couple of inches and slowly pour just enough to wet his lips. Avery...Avery...we have some water for you. Can you open your eyes?"

Celia turned and ran towards the driveway to intercept the ambulance. Avery was opening his eyes as Alton tried to balance the head in one hand and the glass of water in the other. Avery's lips moved at the touch of moisture and then parted. He took one swallow, and then a second as the ambulance headlights turned at the end of the driveway and bathed them all in brilliance.

Avery closed his eyes from the glare and Alton allowed his head to drop a couple of inches.

Doctor XXXXXXXX could see Avery lying on the concrete with Velma and Alton kneeling down next to him in his headlights. He left the motor running and the lights on, ramming the vehicle into park and throwing open the door.

He was alone; the clinic insisted he take the ambulance home with him at night 'just in case'. His wife had been in the bathtub and waiting for her

to dress would have been a delay.

"Is he conscious? A heart attack?" He knew of Velma's credentials and while he barely had met the woman, her reputation was excellent.

"He's awake and breathing normally except for an occasional irregularity. His pulse is normal, he has no chills, and he has talked to us."

The doctor bent down and confirmed the pulse. He could see Avery had perspired profusely but it didn't look fresh.

"How did he awaken; on his own?"

"I found him crumpled up folded against his legs backwards. He came to when we applied ice to his forehead and I used a few drops of these," holding up the ammonia smelling salts.

"Avery, can you speak with me? Mr. Burgess, please open your eyes."

All of these conversations were registering but to Avery they seemed to be from outer space. He didn't realize they were right there in front of him or about him. He opened one eye and saw the face of the clinic doctor.

"Avery, I must ask you some questions before we move you. If you can't answer, blink your eye. Blink one time for yes, two times for no. Do you understand me?"

He blinked one time and slowly his second eye opened.

"Good. Now, is there any pain in your chest?

Two blinks.

"Excellent. Think about your fingers and hands. Do they feel like they are asleep?"

Avery tested his fingers again. No change; two blinks.

"Very good. Now your toes...is there any unusual sensation in your toes?"

He tested his toes inside of his shoes. Two blinks.

The doctor turned to Velma. "I don't think there has been any arterial blockage...no heart attack. I'm concerned he is awake but isn't talking. He did talk with you?"

"Oh yes, when he first woke up he spoke in a normal, strong voice and wanted to know what had happened."

"Did he say anything else?"

Velma looked quickly at her children. Both understood she alone would answer.

"No...that was it." She wasn't going to mention the light in the sky. It couldn't possibly help the doctor diagnose what happened to Avery.

"Alright, let's get him onto a stretcher and down to the clinic. Young lady, will you help me bring the equipment?" motioning to Celia. The two trotted through the glare of headlights to the rear of the ambulance.

"Mom, what do you think he ...saw?" asked Alton.

"I'm sure I can't say" Velma began. "Whatever it was, it gave him quite a fright. I think his body's alright, but his mind may need some rehabilitating. Whatever you do, don't mention what he said..."

"Not to anyone; don't worry!"

Two silhouettes appeared in the headlights carrying a rolled up stretcher. In ten minutes time, Avery Burgess would be inside of the clinic emergency room.

-30-

Chapter Twenty Two

"Good morning. It is 7 AM on Tuesday January 1st in the Turks and Caicos Islands; this is Robert Manchester with the first edition news.

"Portobello businessman Avery Burgess was transported to the Portobello Clinic by ambulance around 8 Monday evening after suffering an unknown collapse. Burgess's condition as reported by his son Alton is satisfactory. The clinic would not release any additional information except to say Burgess was not held at the clinic overnight.

"A source within the local police department reports the investigation into Sunday's fire and the related death of telephone company worker Samuel Stubbs is continuing. However, the Governor's office has placed a lid on the details of the investigation which one source told WIV news was proceeding under the privacy of being classified as a national security matter.

"The police department reports three minor traffic accidents during the past 24 hours; all after midnight and some apparently involved people who had been drinking prior to their accidents. Police Chief Arnold Watson said he was relieved the island did not have a repeat of the 1990 New Year's eve when two died in traffic accidents. There were no serious injuries in this year's accidents.

"Chief Minister Orville Smythe's office has issued a follow-up statement to his Monday news conference concerning allegations that nearly 3 dozen private telephones had been tapped in the islands. Smythe's spokeswoman told WIV news a settlement of the matter involving his government, the British government and the telephone company was likely within 72 hours. His office also announced there would be meetings today to deal with the probability there will be changes in his ministerial appointments. The various ministers

of government serve at the pleasure of the Chief Minister and with the approval of the Governor.

"More island news after this message from the Erebus Inn of Portobello."

Benjamin Dornfield had stayed the night in his office, finally catching some sleep around 4 AM on a couch. He would never admit to anyone he listened to the radio or the local news, but it was actually an important safety valve when he was overloaded. He knew Manchester would do legwork to at least catch the major stories while he slaved over the type setter and paste up boards. The Burgess collapse story caught him by surprise; 'another one to run down before this paper goes to bed' he told himself. Absent-mindedly he rose from his couch rubbing his tired eyes and went to a file cabinet where he kept a collection of head-on photo shots of prominent islanders. Locating the 'B' folder, he pawed through several dozen shots before selecting one of Burgess. He had no love for Avery Burgess; the photo he chose had been taken just after former Chief Minister Nat Simpson was arrested. Burgess was very tired looking and distraut in the photo. Dornfield was proud of himself for selecting this particular photo; 'he looks like a man on the verge of collapse'. To the newspaper man, this was 'good journalism', matching a picture to a story even when there was no direct relationship between the two. He laid the halftone on the paste up board for later use.

The radio was now out of the newscast and he turned it down just as his first telephone call of the day came in.

"Dornfield here."

"You know AG coming?"

"Today?"

"Yes, in few hours. He interrogating Rita Rigby. This about fire and telephone mess."

The voice was that of an informer inside of the Portobello police department; a man who 'owed' Dornfield for past favors.

"Is she on the island?"

"LaSarde pick her up already; she locked in Watson office."

"OK; thanks."

Returning the telephone to the cradle, Dornfield pondered how he could get to Rita Rigby. Street talk said she worked in the room that had contained the elaborate monitoring equipment. On his layout board were six photos he had taken of the burned remains of the room. The same policeman who just hung up had been on duty guarding the room late Sunday afternoon when he gained entry for the photos. 'His instruction from the AG was to allow no-one inside' he recalled. 'Why would the AG be so concerned that people not see the remains?'

If he couldn't get to Rita, who else would help? Police Chief Arnold Watson would never cooperate to let him inside to see Rita. The man went by the book, even when there was no book.

'Let's see ... Rita has two kids and is not married. She lives at home with her mother and brother. BINGO! Rita's brother...of course.'

Studd Rigby was the bull of Portobello. He openly boasted of 17 children although he was not more than 30 years old. The man had never married, and was proud of not only the number of children but that he provided financial assistance to each. He was a tall, strong black who a century before would have been selected by his master for just this purpose; breeding. Studd worked for Avery Burgess driving heavy equipment and operating a crane at

the docks. His twenty year old pickup truck was fender decorated with the head of a raging bull.

Rita and Studd were close; as close as brother and sister could be. Studd stayed out of local politics and bars. When he wasn't working, he was cruising the island surveying the local young women. He was as careful about choosing attractive, bright young girls to bear his children ~~as~~ and they were pleased to be asked to do so. Studd had his own, private, selective breeding program and in some circles of the island, bearing a child of Studd's was almost as important as a high school diploma. For each of his 17 women, Studd had been the first to gift them with a baby. For most, he was the first to make love to them.

'He will know all about this; but getting him to talk to me will be difficult. He would never tell me anything that might endanger Rita.'

Dornfield knew Studd Rigby worked seven days a week, and on holidays. 'He has to support 17 kids!' he thought to himself. He glanced at his watch; 7:30 AM, a good time to run out to South Dock to find the man.

...

Attorney General Jeremy McTabbish pulled up in front of the Waterloo residence front door. The Governor had asked for an ~~7:30~~ early meeting, before the AG's flight to Portobello. Jeremy knew about Luscious Lane; the Governor had called him Monday evening. He didn't know where the Governor had obtained the information.

"Good morning Jeremy; the Govenor is waiting for you in his office." Mindy looked rested and ready for the new year. In her mind, this was the first day of the last year of Martin's Governorship; they had but to hang on for 365 more days...

"Thank you; how is he feeling?"

"Much better, thank you. But judge for yourself!"

Jeremy rounded the corner and saw his excellency in casual clothes with sleeves rolled up. Two legal pads were open before him; he was writing in one and reading notes from the second when Jeremy lightly tapped on the door frame. The Governor looked up.

"By all means, come in Jeremy. And how are you this fine morning?" The Governor, too, knew this was the first day...of the last year. It was not that he might forget; Mindy had mentioned it right after the alarm clock radio went off at 6:58 AM.

"Some tea, rolls?"

Jeremy helped himself to a cup of tea and a gooey roll covered with pink confection, selecting an empty chair close to the desk.

The Governor looked up from his notes again as Jeremy took a large bite from the roll.

"Positively wicked; Althea certainly knows the way to a man's heart!", referring to his housekeeper's kitchen talents.

Jeremy was too engrossed in chewing the sticky coating to respond.

"Now, let's look at today. I hope you will be back here not later than 3; I've set up a meeting with the CM again for 4 PM. You will call and advise me of progress?"

Jeremy's mouth was still filled with partially chewed dough and sugar. He nodded agreement.

to abrupt to fit here.

"Luscious Lane...the wife of our government's favorite white architect, and lady of questionable reputation, adds a new wrinkle to the case for prosecution. I'd like to have Smythe's reaction to her name before we make

up our minds how to proceed. There could be some problems."

Jeremy's mouth was now finally clear and he was chasing the roll with a gulp of hot tea.

"Yes, I understand she may have given certain favors to some of our elected leaders. Do you believe Smythe to be included in this?"

"I don't know; I don't believe anything...yet. But the popular story is that she has been involved with at least some of our ministers. I'd say the chances are very good at least one or perhaps two of those in yesterday's meeting have been rewarded by her favors."

"So today, after I interrogate this Rita Rigby ... shall I call on Mrs. Lane?"

"I think not. She and her husband have too many assets here to leave in a hurry. And if I were her, I'd expect some help through their intimate government contacts."

The AG wouldn't make the same decision; he was reminded of Harvey's sudden disappearence. 'If anything, I'd expect her to run before Harvey' he thought.

"And Mr. Dornfield?"

"Yes, well, I've given this a great deal of thought. Unfortunately, January first is a bad day to get a recommendation from the home office. I did talk with them just moments ago and they are trying to expedite my request but really doubt we'll hear from them today. So ..."

"Yes?"

"If you have time, I'd suggest you drop in on our favorite editor and let him know it is an off-the-record chat. Maybe you can learn how much he knows or suspects. At least in that way we can determine how vigorous our plan

should be to handle him."

"And your private plan to handle him?" Jeremy had no knowledge of what the Governor had in mind, and knew not to ask.

"Noon today. That's as soon as I will know whether or not it might work."

"The Rigby woman; do you want her brought back here and detained?"

"No, absolutely not. We might as well announce on the radio our entire problem. Hauling her to Grand Turk would set off bells and whistles all over the native community. Take her statement on tape and then write it out in summary form in long hand. And have her sign it. I'd warn her to keep her mouth shut and stay on the island. That should do it."

Again, Jeremy would not call it that way. He feared they might end up this case with nobody to prosecute; nobody they could bring to court.

Jeremy bid the Governor good bye and returned to his car to drive the short mile to Grand Turk's airport. There the government pilot and plane awaited his arrival. It was his style to raise questions for the Governor to consider, but to never actually question his decisions. 'He, afterall, is the Governor. And he has decades of civil service experience on me. But still, might this entire fiasco not end up being swept under the rug?' It prayed on his legal conscience.

What's that?

...

Dornfield's car trip to South Dock, the island's only deep water port, detoured south from the main road through the native village of Five Cays. Maria Gonzalez and her husband lived there and he prayed her note had been in error; 'maybe she is home, sick' he hoped.

Five Cays had been the smallest of three native villages on the island prior to the arrival of the white developers. It looked to be the smallest

today as well, but Dornfield knew looks were deceiving. The village lys with a single road through the middle; abandoned unfloatable boats from an era that would never return are strewn about the beach south of the road. Between the road and the beach, several small shacks and rusting trailer house hulks. Two bars and a fried chicken stand are sandwiched within the crusty buildings. The bars are native owned and operated but few natives venture inside. These are the haunts of the small, but growing Dominican ex-patriot population, and the Haitian money and work managers who virtually run the lives of the illegal Haitian wet-backs populating the ridges above Five Cays.

Immediately above the road, away from the water on the first high ground ridge, the homes of the native Portobellean residents. If all of the true TI's in the village were counted, they would be fewer than 300. But just beyond the ridge, invisible from the road is a valley, a second ridge, another valley and a third ridge. No roads lead into these valleys nor over these ridges.

But a person walking to the native homes on the first ridge and looking north suddenly sees hundreds of squatter shacks and shanties, many constructed of cardboard and shipping crates, built cheek to jowl across the landscape. Each one appears to depend for support upon the next, and strings of flimsy housing stretches for as far as the eye can see. The settlement remains virtually unknown to most who live on the island since it cannot be seen from the Five Cays road. Whites would never venture to the first ridge, occupied by natives, let alone the valleys and ridges beyond. And within the island's social structure, Five Cays natives occupy the lowest rungs on the social pole; thus few natives from other villages visit here. Not that the

native residents of Five Cays object to being ignored; quite the contrary. By being left alone, they had built up a cash flow machine of unique proportions. Their tiny 4 by 6 foot shanties are rented to Haitians and Dominicans at typically $25 per 'room' per week. Most are occupied by 3 or more people so rent money flows into native bank accounts by the hundreds and thousands of dollars each week. More than 1,000 'illegals' live here at peak times.

Gonzalez and his wife Maria occupied a 'deluxe suite' in the shanty town; they had electricity from an extension cord and their own slop jar as a toilet. They even had a door with hinges and a padlock on their two-room 'suite'. Of course they paid big dollars for these extras; $200 per month.

Dornfield parked his car at the main road and began the long walk up the hill to the top of the first ridge; then down into the first valley walking between rows of shanty-homes. None had doors, many did have ragged curtains or rugs or moth-eaten blankets fluttering in ~~place of a proper door~~ the doorway. The settlement reminded him of poverty housing he visited while on a journalistic fact-finding mission to Haiti and Jamaica; with one significant difference. Those shanty-towns had been filled with tiny children and elderly people. Here, behind Five Cays, there were almost no children of any age and very few elderly. This was more of a worker's camp, created to fill the need of illegal immigrants who held no work permits nor entry visas. The percentage of males was high, perhaps 75%. Dornfield spied a short line of males waiting patiently before a shanty to his right; he could see why. Inside, a grossly overweight Haitian woman was servicing them one at a time. His curiousity peaked, he stopped to observe and glanced at his watch. Three minutes after a man passed through the soiled rug covering the doorway, he

was stumbling back into the daylight pulling up his pants and tieing them in place with a rope belt. The next man in line entered as soon as the first came out. It took five minutes before the second man reappeared and a third went in.

'That's one business that's not taking the holiday,' he thought privately, and resumed his pace over the second hill and down into the next valley. To his left, the 'deluxe suites' where Maria lived. From a distance he could see a padlock was firmly on the door. Still, he plodded on; he had come too far to turn back when his destination was but 200 more feet.

Approaching the padlocked door he looked about for someone to talk to; 'Perhaps a neighbor knows of her whereabouts?' he hoped. Several people were watching him, but when he turned to look at them, each turned their head away. He knew the entire community was illegal, and he was probably being watched out of fear he might represent some form of government agency. Many of the residents here had been previously caught, deported and then they snuck back to his island because work was available here. He might not approve of this, but he understood why it was happening. He also understood the native residents of Five Cays would react swiftly and with vegeance if his newspaper printed even one line about the business going on here.

His hand grasped the padlock and yanked. It held firm.

"Maria? Maria Gonzalez?" There was no answer.

He was turning to leave when a voice called his name. "Dornfield...what you do here? You not write about this!"

He recognized the voice and turned his shoulder part way to see the large native man walking towards him.

"Lionel! Happy New Year to you!"

The 300 popund man was not smiling. He carried a baseball bat and wore a cap announcing YANKEES across the front bill. The bat was a weapon, an intimidator. Lionel did not play baseball.

"I say, you not write about this!"

"Lionel, we are friends. Why would I do such a thing? I am here looking for my employee, Maria Gonzalez. Do you know where..."

Lionel extended his right arm and swung the bat menacingly, pointing it towards the empty Gonzalez suite. "They leave, no notice. They tell me not come back. He work Harvey, you know?"

"Yes, I know. Do you have a key to their lock?"

"Why you want in there? Nothing good there. I already look."

"You do have a key, then?"

Lionel was pulling a sizeable wad of keys on a flimsy chain from his pocket. "Maybe she have papers belong to you inside, that why you look?"

Benjamin wondered why he hadn't thought of that himself. Actually, he knew he was not a very good detective and regretted this fact.

"Yes, papers. May I look?"

Lionel was already trying keys in the lock. None fit. "It here, just wait" and he continued the key search. Finally he found the correct one; the padlock unsnapped, and the door swung open.

"I go now. You lock when you finish. And you not write about this, OK?"

"Yes, of course." And Dornfield stepped into the darkened room, stopping to allow his eyes to adjust in the dimness.

He was trying to figure out why he wanted to be inside in the first place. He harbored no interest in Maria's life style nor where she lived.

The lady was a trained, talented composing machine operator and worked cheaply because her husband was already on the island working for Harvey in the construction business. Beyond that, she interested him not at all.

The room he entered tripled as a kitchen, a sitting room, and a place to eat. A small portable refrigerator, a radio, and a hot plate were the only saleable items here. They were still plugged into a frayed electrical extension cord stuck through a window. There were no lights and through a crudely cut doorway was a single bed, barely large enough for one person. One folding chair, held together with pieces of scrap wire, and a ceramic jug that substituted for a toilet completed the second room's appointments.

'If anything is hidden here, it won't take long to find it' he thought. Inside the refrigerator he found a few foodstuffs. He groped in the darkness along two short shelves and found dryed beans and rice. Cockroaches scattered from both bags when he touched them. He turned and took two steps to land in the bedroom. The only possible hiding place was the bed. Remembering the cockroaches, he slowly lifted a corner of the thin mattress and saw a cut piece of plywood below. 'That's the largest single piece of plywood in this entire building' he thought to himself. It probably measured 3 feet by 6 feet. There was nothing under the mattress nor under the plywood.

'Well, that would seem to be that' he decided. 'They stripped it clean before leaving; or, they had nothing to begin with.' His eyes were now better adjusted to the dimness. Leaving the door open for better light was a consideration when first entering. But he thought better of that. 'I don't want all of those people watching me search this place.'

Benjamin turned around and took the two steps out of the bedroom for the

closed door. Something caught his eye; something almost white jammed under the hot plate. He reached out and touched it; the edge of a file folder. Carefully he lifted the ancient heating appliance and pulled the manila from the shelf. The light was too weak to read the hand written title on the folder but inside he counted five sheets of paper.

Benjamin unbuttoned his shirt and slid the folder against his stomach and chest. Rebuttoning the shirt, he pushed open the door and stepped back into the blinding sunlight.

...

Avery Burgess awoke with the morning sun; Velma was already out of bed and he could hear her in some distant room moving metallic objects about. After his ambulance ride to the clinic, Avery had walked under his own power into the examining room. With Velma at his side he had allowed Doctor XXXXXX to check over his vital signs. When the doctor had gone to another room for a sedative Avery had reached out for Velma's hand and pulled her close to him. She was delighted with his first sign of response. She was shocked when he said in a restrained whisper 'Get me out of here...now!'.

As soon as she could, she had him back in the family car. The doctor insisted Avery be given a sedative to help him sleep and she took the bottle of pills certain Avery would never crack the lid; at least not tonight. He had not uttered another word until they were home, he was in bed, and the children had left the room. Then she had sat down on the side of the bed, took his hands in her own and looked him straight in the eye.

'And what, pray God, was that all about?' she had demanded. He had then told her the full story, from the Governor's request for help to his sighting of the 'star'; a sign from God. Through his full explanation Velma

said not a word, holding his hands tightly for the full ten minutes. At the end she had simply said 'Why don't you go to sleep now? I think you've had a very full night.' He had nodded agreement and she turned off the lights.

Avery awoke with his head buzzing. Actually, the plan for Portobello's independence had been created years before. It was the work of an old friend who had drawn up the plan on paper. The paper had been placed inside of an envelope and sealed. The envelope was locked away in a safe within his two storm and bomb proof rooms in the office building. Today, Avery Burgess would go to the rooms, lock the doors from the inside, open the safe and unseal the envelope. The day of liberation was at hand.

...

Dornfield would not unbutton his shirt until he was safely inside of his car with the motor running. Then he drove a mile down the road and stopped in the bush, far from any buildings, checking to be sure his doors were locked. Now he opened the shirt and withdrew the folder.

He recognized Maria's handwriting on the file folder tab. It said "TEL/Incoming Customs". Laying the folder on the seat beside him, he flipped back the cover and saw the sheets of paper he had counted in the dimness of the room. Four were customs entry forms; an original and three carbon duplicates. The fifth was an invoice from a company in Atlanta. He studied this sheet first.

The invoice was addressed to Island Construction, a firm Dornfield knew was owned by Harvey; the same firm nearing completion of low cost government housing between the airport and Five Cays. His eyes went to the bottom of the invoice; it said $32,467.00 (USD).

'Whew...that's a bunch of money' he whistled to himself. 'What in the world is this for?'

The top of the invoice said it came from a business calling itself "INTERNAL TELEPHONE SECURITY DEVICES, INC." and in the middle were three items listed with a price for each. He read what he saw.

'One (1) Model A90-002 Exchange Synthesizer (Prototype) ...$31,500

'Two (2) Model ADC-006 battery modules ($483.50 ea).....$ 967'

A note on the bottom said the order was prepaid and no amount was due. He turned to the Customs entry papers.

'I see ... the importer is Harvey's construction company, and the shipment came in by Turks Air December 26th. This means it is still in the Custom warehouse.' The duty to be collected caught his eye; 30 percent of the total.

"Wow" he said out loud. "Harvey paid thirty two five plus he would pay another ten thou ... nearly forty three thousand bucks for this thing, whatever it is. What in the world would be worth this kind of money? It must be the size of a truck!"

He returned the papers to the folder and placed it under his seat. This would require some sleuthing, perhaps a call to the company in Atlanta. Two bells had rung; 'Harvey' and 'telephone'. He now knew the street stories he was hearing about Harvey and Cable and Wireless were more fact than fiction.

...

McTabbish had arranged to borrow the DC's office for an hour. The District Commissioner was away on holiday and the entire building was closed assuring him of full privacy. There was a knock at the back door.

"Come in."

The door opened and Lieutenent LaSarde followed a tall, shapely native lady into the room.

"Rita Rigby, sir" announced LaSarde.

"Miss Rigby, please have a seat. Lieutenent, you may stand for me just outside the door. We are not to be disturbed."

"Yes sir."

The door closed behind him. Jeremy adjusted his twin legal pads on the desk; one listed prepared questions, the second was for answers. A small cassette recorder was on the desk facing the woman.

"Miss..is it Miss or Mrs. Rigby?"

The lady showed no facial emotion but her hands were tightly grasping the arms of the chair.

" Miss...sir. I have no husband."

"Good. Miss Rigby, I must ask you some questions concerning your employment at the burned out apartment. I will record your answers with this machine", and he reached forward to start the machine, "and make my notes here. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, sir." She was now looking as if she might faint.

"Some water, perhaps?"

"Oh yes, please!"

Jeremy got up, walking to a sidebar where a pitcher of water and two glasses were waiting. He poured water into both glasses, turned and handed one to Rita.

"Miss Rita Rigby" he said for the benefit of the taped record, "may I call you Rita?"

She was still drinking the water. She swallowed what was in her mouth and

answered. "Yes, please."

"Rita, you have or had a job inside of apartment number 7 in the apartment complex off Leeward highway that burned this past Sunday; is that correct?"

"Yes, until it burn I have job."

"Can you tell me what you did there?"

"I operate tape recorders, I write down when machines record."

"Do you know what those machines recorded?"

"No sir, I not listen. I just be sure machines have plenty tape."

"I see. You did know the machines were connected to telephone lines and they recorded whatever was on the telephone lines?"

"I not understand."

"The tape machines were recording telephone calls; you knew this?"

"Oh yes, Mr. Stubbs tell me that."

"But you never listened to the telephone calls, or the tapes?"

"Oh no, I told not to do that; plenty trouble."

"Who told you that? Who said 'plenty trouble'."

"Samuel Stubbs; he tell me every day not listen."

Jeremy believed he had a cooperative interogee but the next few questions would be crucial. If the answers were not helpful, he might as well get over to see Dornfield.

"Did anyone else every tell you not to listen?"

"No, there no-one but Samuel."

"The tapes on the machines...what happened to the tapes?"

She was drinking water again. The glass was now empty.

"You ask me where tapes go?"

"Yes, when a tape was on a machine, did you mark it with a number, like a telephone number?"

"Samuel have empty tapes on shelf. Each tape have number. When tape fill up, I take full tape from machine and put on new tape. Number on tape have to be same as number on machine."

"I see. Now, when a tape was filled up, what did you do with it?"

"Put in box, Samuel have box for filled tapes."

"And what happened to those tapes, the ones you put into the box?"

"More water...please?"

Jeremy slid back from the desk and reached for the glass. 'I hope the lady's room is open here; she may need it shortly!' he thought, refilling the glass. Rita took it gratefully and drank past the half-way mark.

"Let me ask you again, the filled tapes you placed into the box, what happened to them?"

"They gone."

"Gone? Gone where?"

"Each night I go home, there be tapes in box. Next day I come back, tapes be gone. And ..."

"And...what?"

"After I go, tapes on machines be changed too. In morning, each machine have new tapes. Somebody get all tapes."

"Every night?"

"Most every night. Not Christmas night."

'The mechanics fit' thought Jeremy. 'But she is not volunteering anything about other people. Could it be she never saw anyone but Stubbs?'

"Rita, this is all very helpful. How long did you do this...work?"

"Six or seven days every week, ten hours, more, every day."

"For how long...when did you start this...how many months ago?"

"First day, when Samuel ask me. Only two tape machines then."

"You mean the day Samuel started this business?"

"Yes, that day."

"Did anyone else ever work there?"

"No, just me."

"You were there six or seven days a week, ten or more hours a day, that must have been very lonely."

"I have cable TV, I watch my stories."

"I'm sure that helped. Did you ever have visitors...other than Samuel?"

"Samuel say no visitors. I ask him many times if my friend come to sit with me. He always say no."

"Did Samuel always come alone, never with anyone else?"

"He alone...except maybe... two times."

"Two times?" 'Perhaps, just perhaps...' Jeremy hoped.

"Can you tell me who came with him those two times?"

"One time man from Grand Turk, named Cox. He work telephone company."

"And the other, second time?"

"Man everyone know...Minister Harvey."

'Jackpot...at least it was a start.' Jeremy stopped to change his legal pad page and check the operation of his tape recorder.

"Minister Lawrence Harvey...tell me about the time he visited your business."

"Not much to tell. He come with Samuel, they work on equipment, change tapes, talk. Stay maybe hour and leave."

"What did they talk about?"

"I not listen. They ask me go to 'nother room and watch TV. I do this."

"Did you ever see a woman come there; a white woman?"

"To business?"

"Yes, a white woman who came into the business, for any reason."

He could tell Rita was thinking. Her eyes screwed up to the top of her head and she started to smile.

"No, no white woman. Not in business."

"If you never saw a white woman there, did you think maybe a woman had been there, for some reason?"

Rita laughed and looked down at the floor. She was obviously reluctant to tell what thought had crossed her mind.

"Maybe..."

"Tell me about it."

"You know bedroom in apartment?"

"Yes, I saw the burned remains of it."

"We not use bedroom for business. But I tink somebody use bedroom sometimes...for other business" and she looked down at her feet and began to giggle.

"Why do you think that?"

"I have more water, please?"

"Yes, of course" and he rose again and emptied the pitcher's remains into her glass. She took it and drank several swallows.

"Please tell me why you thought the bedroom...was used for... other business."

Rita grasped both arms of the chair and stared at the tape recorder as if

she could talk to it and not to Jeremy directly.

"Sometimes I come work and bedroom be mess. Somebody sleep there...or someting else there. One time I find woman's tings there."

"Oh? What kind of things?"

"You know, tings."

Jeremy knew he was out of his skill area. He did not know women's 'tings' or things, and he was about to show his lack of knowledge.

"Rita, I am not very smart about woman's things. Please explain to me what you mean."

"These tings" and she pointed to her breasts; "these tings" and she pointed to her thighs.

"You mean..." and Jeremy was now flushed about the face "you mean a bra and... panties?"

"Yes, those tings. I find them in bedroom with bed all messed up. Some woman lose those tings there."

"What did you do with...those things?"

"I no tell anybody. I take home with me after I fix up bedroom."

"I see." Actually he did not see. But for the moment he was out of questions.

"Rita, this is serious business. I must ask you not to discuss anything you have told me with anybody. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Good. I must also ask you to not leave the island unless you talk with me first. Do you have any plans to leave the island?"

"No, I like here. My children and mama here. I stay."

"Good. I may want to talk with you again. Lieutenent LaSarde will contact

you if I do."

"I in trouble?"

"No, I think not. Please don't worry about being in trouble. The people who owned the business...well, you are not in trouble."

"Good. You want tings?"

"Things?" Jeremy was baffled. 'What things?'

"These tings" and she pointed again to her breast and thighs. "Ones I find, you want?"

"You still have them?"

"Oh yes, I take home and wash. They too big for me but I keep. I still have."

Jeremy smiled and laughed to himself. Rita looked at him closely but said nothing. 'Can we get a conviction on a woman because a bra and pair of panties fit her?' he pondered. 'The Governor will love this!'

"Yes, by all means. If Lieutenent LaSarde takes you home now, can you give these things to him?"

"Yes, I do that."

"Good...thank you for your help. Lieutenent LaSarde!" he called in a raised voice, "Will you come in please?"

...

"Studd, I promise not to use Rita's name in the story. All I'm trying to do is verify a few facts. If I do a good job on this story, it may even help your sister."

Studd Rigby was neither pleased to see Benjamin Dornfield nor helpful to him.

"I got for-teen 'tainers to move" he explained for the third time. "You

get outa' my way or I move you too!"

Benjamin stepped from the big man's way as Studd swung himself up the ladder and into the seat of the crane. A freighter with 20 and 40 foot containers was sitting at the dock; Studd had been there since sun-up strapping, lifting and moving around the 15 ton cargo haulers filled with building materials and foodstuffs. He had a boat captain and Burgess to answer to; and arguing with Dornfield was not paying him a nickle.

"How many kids you got?" Dornfield yelled at him through the roar of the crane engine. Studd cocked his head outside of the cab and cupped a hand to an ear.

"How many kids you got?" he tried again.

A smile broke over the crane operator's face; his hand went to the controls and stepped the engine speed down.

"Children? You ask about children?"

"Yes, I understand you have many. How many?

Studd pulled himself up from the crane seat and stood outside the cab.

"Seventeen now, two more comin'!" he said very enthusiastically.

"And you are proud of these childen?"

"Oh my yes! I very proud!"

Dornfield now saw an opening; a way to get the man to relax and talk with him.

"I would like to print your picture in my newspaper, will all 17 of your children. Would you like that?"

Studd clapped his hands together in pleasure. Dornfield knew this was the way to the man's mind. And Studd climbed down from the crane.

"Now, tell me about the children" said Dornfield, pulling a notebook from his rear pocket. 'And then ...we'll talk about Rita' he thought to himself.

-30-

Chapter Twenty Three

Avery stood poolside resting his hand on the diving platform. His head turned skyward to the west.

'That's where I saw it' he recalled. 'It came straight towards me and bloomed into a brilliant glow before it reached overhead. It was unlike anything I have ever witnessed before; with far more character than a shooting star!'

Velma had finally commented on his 'star', suggesting he might have mistaken a shooting star or meteorite for a sign from God. He had dismissed her suggestion with a terse 'no'.

'No, I asked for a sign and went outside. And there it was; in the heavens and moving right towards me. God has spoken.'

Today was an excellent day for Avery to disappear into the private two-room chamber buried within his office building. January first... 'nobody at work here today, and, this is the first day of a brand new year.'Avery thought to himself 'all of the pieces fit together; this is another sign from God; a new year, and a new era'.

"That was no shooting star!" he announced out loud, turning on his heel walking to the door of the office.

Access to the inner sanctum began in his private office. A wall length storage closet with locked doors allowed access to rows of file cabinets and emergency supplies. At the back of the storage closet, a concealed doorway with another lock slid open when he inserted a special key. As the door moved open a battery powered light flicked on revealing a short hallway and a massive steel door at the opposite end. He was now inside of the steel re-enforced concrete chamber; even the ceiling was poured concrete. If the

building around the inner sanctum disappeared, this hallway would then appear to be a covered entry way leading to the real structure.

The 24 inch thick steel door could be opened by any of three systems. A weather tight cover snapped aside to reveal a key lock. Inserting a key and turning it activated the door's mechanism. A second weather cover moved aside to reveal an electronic touch keypad; by entering the correct numbers in sequence the door would also open. Both of these techniques required electrical power; either the island's commercial power or electricity from the constantly trickle charged batteries buried deeply inside of the structure.

A third cover required a small screwdriver to access. Behind the removeable plate was a rather plain looking tumbler wheel such as would be found on any modern safe door. By entering the assigned numerical combination, the door unlocked and gripping a handle it could be pulled open.

The key to the sliding door at the rear of his closet also opened the massive steel door; but had to be inserted between 15 and 17 seconds after the first door was opened or it would not work. Avery had practiced this sequence with each member of his family on numerous occasions. The touch keypad and tumbler lock shared the same combination numbers; all related to the birthdays of his three children. Both sons, his daughter and Velma had been drilled on this procedure as well. Once each week Avery personally checked all three mechanisms to verify they remained fault free.

He walked to the steel door while staring at his watch. '15 seconds-mark'; he inserted the key into the opening and turned to the right. The door's lock released swinging it open as battery powered lights inside

the first room came on. By removing the key from the lock, the door now automatically swung shut; as did the sliding door at the rear of the closet. He was now alone, and secure.

A wall status panel next to the door told him the state of battery charge, level of emergency fuel in the generator fuel cells, level of water in the storage tanks. Emergency VHF and shortwave communication sets reported their own status individually. Avery spent nearly five minutes scanning the rows of lights and LEDs. It gave him a great feeling of comfort to know he had a safe place to retreat to if conditions warranted. Satisfied all systems were within limits, he reached for a switch and pushed. Commercial power now operated everything in the rooms; the battery power was once again standing by.

The first room was designed for living; a kitchen area and two bathrooms built around modern sailboat yacht technology. One wall contained fold down cots; four cots with emergency food stores inside of the openings which the cots folded away from. Another wall was occupied with four drawer legal file cabinets; each was fireproof, locked, and mounted on stainless steel casters. Avery routinely transferred sensitive documents from his outer office work area into these cabinets. Open shelves along a third wall were filled with plastic bins containing sealed military foodstuffs, plastic wrapped emergency lighting and medical supplies. A table contained electronics; two geiger counters, wind speed/direction and rainfall gauges, and a barometer. Each of these connected to outside sensors and a jack attached to yet another sensor would allow someone to measure the radiation levels outside, with the geiger counter inside. A primary and a back up VHF two-way radio, and companion shortwave radio transceivers completed the

huh?

major electronic items.

Avery's latest addition was a tiny color TV camera originally created for the American space program. Mounted out of doors in an implosion and radiation proof container, he could command its direction of vision and field of view with tiny controls on the monitor inside.

The second room remained dark, at Avery's choice; designed primarily for his own family and a degree of privacy. Hundreds of times he considered whom he might invite into the chambers if world events forced him to seek refuge. The cots in the first room were for such invitees; beds in the second would sleep seven people comfortably. Each time he made a mental list, it varied. In the worst scenario he could fanatasize, world nuclear war, he knew those invited might be among the few survivors of holocaust. It weighed on him that he had the power to decide whom might live through such a cataclysm. For as long as 90 days, 11 people would be safe here.

Coded numbers on the file cabinet exteriors told him the span of time each cabinet represented. From the oldest, on the far left, to the most recent towards the right, he could relate the numbers to the time or period of interest. Alton, his oldest son, had been urging him to convert the files to microfiche or computer disc storage. Alton's arguments were sound; faster data retrieval, far less space. He did admit that in another year or two they would be out of room. Hundreds of thousands of sheets of paper were filed here.

But he resisted; as it was now, only he could find specific papers quickly because the coded number system relied on his own sense of history, and his memory, to work. Alton's suggestion would broaden that to include at least his son. Avery was not ready to share so much data, much of it still

very sensitive, with his son.

Cabinet 488 was his target; drawer 456 held the file he would open for the first time in nearly 3 years. A key secured in a magnetic box beneath the cabinet unlocked the beast; he grabbed the drawer and pulled forward.

The manila file folders inside were color coded with tabs. Only one file folder in any of his cabinets had a trio of tags; red-white-red. This was the folder he pulled from the heavy drawer. He had chosen these colors because in his mind a flag for an independent Portobello would have a design based on this combination.

Within the folder he found two familiar envelopes. Each had been sealed with scotch tape some than 30 months ago. The tape was brittle and now yellowed with age. Avery removed the envelopes replacing the folder in the drawer. His knee pushed the drawer shut and he walked to the only comfortable chair in the room.

Instructions on the envelopes suggested he open 'Number One First', where he would find instructions for the next step. Avery felt a tingle of excitement not unlike the thrill he experienced when Velma and he returned to their islands in 1970. He sat in the chair with the envelopes on his lap recalling the events leading up to the envelopes.

'Joshua Foxworth was a reknown reporter for Reuters assigned to the United Nations. He and his wife Nancy first came to Portobello in 1974 and they returned nearly every year until his death in 1988. Foxworth was acquainted with everyone worth knowing at the U.N. and a walking textbook on how developing colonial territories had managed to gain their independence.

'It all started so innocently' he recalled. 'Foxworth, Conner, and Scott were sitting in Scott's office over the Christmas holidays in 1984. I joined

them because I enjoyed the openess of their minds. And Foxworth had said, so matter of factly, "Portobello ought to be thinking about its' own future; independence."

'From that conversation a series of plans had flowed; each one more detailed than the predecessors. Conner had volunteered to keep the minutes of their meetings.

'It must have been in 1985 when I first realized this was a serious thing; that Portobello really could be independent. Yes, it was during 1985 because Conner had just married Pauline.

'By then Conner had been to the United Nations with Foxworth, Scott had collected reams of historical documents tracing the steps to independence of a host of African and Pacific Island colonial territories.'

Two events in 1988 had delayed until now Portobello's independence. First, Conner had gone to Florida where he died suddenly. Several months later Foxworth had also died. Avery remembered how he came into possession of the envelopes.

'Scott called me one day shortly after we learned of Foxworth's death and said he had something in his files for me. When I got there, he explained Conner's last set of minutes on the Portobello matter had been locked in his file cabinets. He thought I should have them to put into a safe place because he knew Conner would want it that way. Strangely, that was the last time I had an intimate conversation with attorney ~~Charles~~ Scott.'

It all flooded back to Avery's mind. He had been blaming Scott's distant behavior on the election in 1988. 'Perhaps that was not it at all; could it be the death of Conner and then Foxworth so dampened the plans for Portobello independence that Scott was reluctant to face me anymore? As a

tightly lipped group of four, we were invincible. When we lost two of our members, Scott felt alone and vulnerable?'

These were new thoughts for Avery. He too had missed the times with both men, ~~now dead~~, but perhaps not as much as Scott. The plan did involve a great deal of leg work at the United Nations and without the two men he too had decided their opportunity had passed.

dead as Scott?

'Am I a foolish man?' he pondered. 'Was this entire exercise simply a group of aging men having their last fling at immortality?' His fingers ran along the sealed envelopes. 'Should I put these back in the cabinet and forget about my sign from God?'

...

Benjamin Dornfield pulled into his office parking area behind the Stop 'N Shop market as a police Rover was backing from his door. Inside the cruiser he saw a white face. The Rover moved to the side and the white man climbed out as Benjamin pulled his own car to a stop. It was the Attorney General.

"This is a surprise!" he said with mock emotion. "Why would you be over here on a holiday?"

The AG stood silently in front of the police vehicle and Benjamin took his time closing the car door and meandering towards the man.

"Is this an official visit?" Benjamin asked placing his hand out for the customary handshake.

"Yes, and no. If you have a few minutes...?"

"Of course, my office is empty and we won't be disturbed. Won't you come in?" and Dornfield slide a key into the lock and pulled the door open.

The AG waved to the policeman driving the cruiser; Dornfield recognized the man to be his inside informer at the department.

The AG began the conversation while following the editor towards the back room. "From the looks in here I'd say you and I share something in common; having to work on this holiday."

Dornfield led him to the only room with an extra chair; the paste up room where gallies hung across the wall and page flats were propped up on ledges and strewn across the drafting table.

"Yes, my deadline falls on Wednesday no matter what the holiday. So today is clean up day. Say, what do you know about Avery Burgess's condition?"

This seemed like a harmless subject to Jeremy.

"Only what I heard on the radio this morning. Do you know more?"

Actually, the editor did. He had learned a few details from Studd Rigby who had talked on the phone with Alton Burgess earlier in the morning.

"Only that it was not a heart attack and Burgess is doing fine this morning. The family is being very secretive however."

"Humm. Well, I respect their privacy. I also cannot imagine how this island might change if something fatal befell that man."

Dornfield has his own opinion about the last comment. Getting rid of the British and the present politicians would, in his mind, be followed closely by ridding the island of the Burgess family. 'Then' he thought 'the real natives here can get this place straight.'

"Well, you didn't stop by on a holiday to discuss such matters. To what do I owe this visit?"

Jeremy had tried to glance about the room searching for page one. His mind was blinded by the several dozen page flats scattered about, each with its own headline or headlines and the large white areas where the advertisements would cozily fit into place at the end. He couldn't find page

one.

"Quite. I hoped you would agree to an off-the-record discussion of this telephone matter."

The editor was ~~abit~~ taken back. The British government never consulted him about news stories in advance of printing; couple this visit with the AG's personally assuming control over the events of this past Sunday and he knew this was no ordinary news story. He decided to play his hand open and bluff as much as possible.

"Off-the-record; that means I can't quote 'an informed source' or use any of what we discuss?"

"Exactly. I'll share things with you, you will share things with me. But neither of us will quote the other and you won't publish anything I tell you."

"Unless..."

"Unless what?"

"Unless I can find a second source for your information; a source that I can quote."

"Perhaps. Let's leave that for now."

"OK, where do we start?"

That was a good question. Jeremy had no intention of recounting the full set of events. He really wanted Dornfield to tell him everything he knew first.

"Let's start with how all of this will look to the outside world. We are just a few years off of the arrest of our Chief Minister and the unfortunate series of events that follows," refering to the way then-Governor Terry Clapton had been driven from the islands by protestors at Grand Turks'

airport. Protestors incited by Dornfield personally.

"Go on."

"Well, I would hope that you would consider how these islands went into an economic decline and how potential investments were set back when all of those events occured."

"And..."

"Well, what people read in your newspaper in London or Toronto, or hear on our radio while here on vacation does affect them."

Dornfield now fully understood the purpose of the AG's visit. Perhaps better than the AG had intended.

"So you want me to tone down the reports and avoid any headlines or details which might upset investors?"

Jeremy hadn't expected the conversation to come to the bottom line so quickly; he was not prepared to answer this, yet.

"It is not government's function in a free press environment to tell you what to print. I would never ...I doubt the Governor would ... ever try to do this. But you can understand our fears?"

Dornfield understood a great deal; that this was the Governor's last year, his retirement depended upon this being a 'quiet year'. He also understood Cable and Wireless was in deep trouble if their lines were being tapped by some third party. He was now suddenly feeling very much in the driver's seat. *Maybe there is something to trade here...*.

"Of course; I understand perfectly. But, there has been a terrible injustice. I fail to see how all of these things can be swept under the rug, forgotten. Let me begin with Mr. Harvey..."

"Quite. He will be prosecuted. We intend... to bring charges in a sealed

indictment. If he should ever return to the islands, the indictment will be unsealed and he will be arrested."

"And there are the people who worked in this operation. Stubbs is ~~of course~~ dead, but there are others. How can they be prosecuted without drawing attention to the details of what happened?"

Jeremy felt he was falling into a trap. And he didn't trust Dornfield's word on being off-the-record.

"There is a way; I am not at liberty to say more than that at this time."

Dornfield was going to play a wild card and watch closely for a reaction.

"People are talking; they are saying Harvey and his people stole telephones. You and I know he was stealing telephone messages. But even the street talk is very close to the truth, yes?"

"Yes ... but street talk will die, especially if nothing appears to incite it again. A newspaper headline and details of the real theft here will be quite another matter. I'm just afraid of elevating the street talk to paper talk."

And the wild card.

"And what about an

"Exchange synthesizer." seems a little abrupt

Jeremy's face turned ashen and his eye lids popped fully open. 'Surely the man did not say...?'

"Exchange synthesizer. Can you tell me what it is?"

Jeremy was now suddenly very shaken. 'How could he? Only a handful of people knew of this ... they were all inside Waterloo on Sunday. How could this man even know about this gadget? And if he knew about the gadget, did he also know the Governor had authorized its use for tapping Harvey's phones?'

He did his best to regain his composure but Dornfield had memorized every reaction on his face; he had also noticed Jeremy grip his hands together tightly and the rush of blood through his fingers.

"Exchange...what?"

Dornfield smiled. He still had no idea what an exchange synthesizer did, but the AG's reaction told him he would find out as soon as the Atlanta firm opened its doors on January 2nd. He couldn't imagine in his own mind anything he could have said to the AG to get a more visible reaction.

"I believe you understood me. An exchange synthesizer, you know, for the telephones."

The AG now felt like he was in the witness chair in a trial, And he was going to get out of that chair as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, he was not a very good actor.

"Yes, well ... I have an airplane to catch. Perhaps we can continue this discussion another time. Oh, would it be possible to see your paper before it goes to...press as you call it?"

The editor was taken back by the hasty retreat. This was just now getting interesting!

"Must you leave? I feel we are just getting started. As for seeing my paper...well, my door is always open to you, or the Governor!"

The AG had already risen, moving sideways towards the door.

"Alright then. I'll be in touch" and the Attornery General disappeared down the hallway.

A wide grin spread over Dornfield's face as he heard the door slam to the outside.

...

Avery sat silently in the chair for more than 30 minutes considering his options. He had never reviewed the last plan; the one drafted by Foxworth and Conner. It was, he knew, based upon the world as it existed in 1988. 'Much has changed in nearly three years' he thought. 'So whatever this says in these envelopes, adjustments will be required. Foxworth was our independence advisor and entree into the U.N.. He is gone. Conner was our logistics expert; he is gone. What remains is Scott, our legalistic advisor, and myself; the point person. I'm not sure our chances are good anymore.'

He rose from his chair with difficulty. His back still ached from his collapse the evening before. He knew he was going to walk back to the file cabinet and re-file the folders when a pain shot through his lower back. He stopped moving and his mind instantly returned to the sign from God. A smile spread throughout his face.

"Yes, I remember. You have given me this pain as a reminder of your sign to me. I am a weak person and I needed this reminder. Thank you dear Lord!"

Still standing, Avery's shaking hands tossed the second envelope back onto the chair. With trembling fingers he ripped the aging tape from the sealed flap on the first and withdrew the papers inside.

...

Attorney Charles Scott was in his office alone; this was, afterall, New Year's day. It was his habit to spend this particular day going through the collection of the year just past; weeding out file folders for clients who no longer used his services, re-arranging those files where separate clients had become joint clients.

Scott found these annual sessions more and more difficult; each year brought at least 100 new clients, it became increasingly complicated to

separate the important from the to be forgotten.

When his good friend Bill Conner had been on Portobello, he kept all of the Conner files out on his desk sideboard. Conner's affairs were sufficently complex he never wanted to run for a file cabinet when Bill dropped in or called. With Bill's absence, his relationship with Pauline had become more and more strained. Pauline resisted him stepping in to simply continue with her as he had with Bill. Then in mid 1990 Pauline switched all of her own business to a competitive firm and Scott was forced to sift through ten year's of Conner files to split out those items dealing with Pauline. These he sent to Herbert McPherson who now represented the woman.

There on his sideboard were 9 heavy file folders representing each year he had handled Bill's affairs. Below the nine folders, separated by a thin sheet of plastic, were three more file folders. The trio on the bottom were thinner than those on top and filled with originals or copies of FAX messages. The folders on the bottom simply said 'W.Campbell' followed by a year; '88, '89, and '90'.

'Should I keep these folders out for another year?' he pondered. 'Do I keep them here because I think having them out will cause something to happen?' He started to pick them up for transport to the filing cabinet when his telephone rang.

"Yes?"

"Charles, Lady Lane here" said the voice in obvious spoof.

Scott chuckled aloud. "Yes ... Lady Lane. What can I do for you?"

"I think I need to see you, now" she began.

"Now, as in today?"

"Today, even sooner."

Scott sighed audibly. He had his own rule; nothing should disturb him on his annual office clean-up day.

"You are sure this can't wait..."

"You have two choices. Now or later. If it's later, you may find me in the pokey."

He glanced at his watch. Perhaps he could still get a few hours of work in.

"Say 1 ... this afternoon?"

"Oh alright, but I'd prefer right now."

"Are you ... is there a policeman coming after you?"

"I hope not. OK, 1 it is. Good bye."

Scott hung up the phone. He had a good idea what this was going to be all about, although what he knew was as much rumour as fact. He did know there had been a great deal of telephoning between island attornies on Monday afternoon; calls he had pointedly been left out of. Eventually this had fallen together for him and his client Luscious Lane was the apparent cause of the confabing.

He took a deep breath and stooped once again to pick up the pile of folders. His fingers reached down to the top of the thin plastic sheet and raised nine bulky folders as the telephone rang a second time.

"Damn!" and he set them back down again.

"Yes?"

"Happy New Year Charles; this is Avery."

Scott's thinning white hair was always falling to the side away from the now nearly hairless mid scalp section. Nervously he took his free hand and ran his fingers the length of his head re-arranging the few hairs remaining.

"Avery! What a pleasant surprise. Happy New Year to you too!"

"Do you remember...those New Year's days we spent together in your office, with Bill and Joshua?"

Scott's pulse quickened and he fumbled to pull his office chair below his bottom to sit down.

"Why yes, of course I do. In fact, I had a pile of Bill Conner's file folders in my hands when the telephone rang. How is that for a coincidence?"

Avery took this as confirmation of his own sign from God. Even the aetheist Charles Scott had been given a sign by God!

"Would you recall envelopes ... two envelopes you gave to me over two years ago?"

Scott's pulse quickened. 'Why would Avery pick today...?'

"Yes, of course. I have here..." and he stopped.

"I never knew until just a few minutes ago the contents of those envelopes is in halves; after preparation, the sheets of paper were cut neatly down the middle from top to bottom. I think we need...."

Scott broke into a wide smile. 'Avery has opened the envelopes; he had promised never to do this...until...'

"Would...would you like to put the two halves together?"

Avery was suddenly very relieved. He felt at peace with himself, for the first time in weeks. 'There is another half...and Charles has them' he confirmed to himself.

"Today?" Avery asked.

"Today. But it will have to be...say 3?"

"In your office...or here?" pondered Avery.

"Don't you have a place there...where we won't be disturbed?"

Avery recalled he had told Charles about his cataclysm chamber but it had been finished after they no longer saw one another very often. 'Yes, this would be the best place.'

"Of course...shall I expect you here at 3?"

"See you then."

...

Governor Burnside was munching slowly on a fresh lobster salad prepared by Mindy when Jeremy called. Only moments before he had gotten off the hot line phone with the home office in London; the news there had not been good.

"Yes?"

"Governor, this is Jeremy. I am heading for the airport now. I met with the Rigby woman and took her statement. Frankly, it won't help us with our third party here."

"Pity. Anything else?"

"Yes, I also met with our ... publisher friend. I think we have a real problem there." Jeremy paused not certain how much more to say on the telephone.

The Governor detected his reluctance to talk.

"Can it wait?"

"Yes, time is not an element; not an hour anyhow. Our meeting is still on for 4?"

"Of course."

"See you in about an hour then; cherrio."

Jeremy hung up the DC office telephone wondering how he was going to explain the meeting with Dornfield to Martin. 'I am still badly upset by this' he confided to himself. 'I must organize my report so it comes out

coherently. I best outline it on a pad.'

He picked up his papers stuffing them into the case. Lasarde was waiting outside to return him to the airport. Jeremy flipped off the lights and made sure the lock button was set on the door.

where is he? DC's office on plane? in car?

"Lieutenent, I am ready to return now."

"Yes sir, no more stops?"

"No more stops. Oh yes, you do have something Rita Stubbs gave you, for me?"

"Yes sir!" The lieutenent reached under his Rover seat pulling out a sizeable but understated black lace bra. He handed it to the AG and then shoved his hand under the seat pawing around a second time.

skimpy?

"Here sir; this is all she give me."

The lieutenent began to smile and Jeremy saw the look on his face.

"Lieutenent; this is evidence! It is just like a gun or a knife; you should have placed it into an evidence bag." Jeremy knew he was reacting out of embarassment but the lieutenent didn't know that.

"Oh yes sir! I didn't know ... shall I get bag for it, now?"

Jeremy was already trying to stuff the bra and panties into his brief case. The wire stays on the bra simply would not fit into the narrow opening. He didn't fancy traveling for the next hour and walking through two airports with a lacy black bra dangling from his brief case.

"Yes, if you please."

The lieutenent hopped out walking double time into the ancient police building.

A car pulled up behind the Rover blocking the exit; a young black man in a dress shirt and a tie got out walking towards him. Jeremy tried to hide

the under garments beneath his brief case but it was too late.

"Mr. McTabbish? I am Alton Burgess. My father asked me to bring this envelope to you; he says it goes to the Governor."

"Oh yes, thank you. I had forgotten all about this. Say, how is your father?"

"You may tell the Governor he is feeling fine this morning; perhaps it was something he ate for dinner. There have been several cases of fish poisoning here lately."

"I am glad to hear that; the Governor will be happy as well." Jeremy could see young Burgess was staring at the bra protruding from under his case.

"A belated Christmas present?" Alton asked pointing at the exposed lace.

"Oh my no! Believe it or not, this is a piece of evidence in a case I am working on." He reached under his briefcase and grabbed the panties as well. "And so is this" holding them up.

Alton was laughing. "I always knew lawyers had the most fun! Well, good day to you sir" and he turned to leave.

"The best to your father" and Jeremy had to admit to himself he had handled that quite well.

...

Martin had learned from the Home Office that if he attempted to censor the newspaper under the sweeping powers of national security, Dornfield could haul him into court where a judge would decide whether the newspaper was likely to endanger the country's security.

He had been further told that lacking a clear cut threat to national security, such as was obvious during a time of civil unrest or war, his

powers did not extend to the press.

'Assume the worst case; Dornfield's paper sets us back a year or two in development. It is true that I couldn't argue convincingly this was a threat to the security of the Turks and Caicos. Drat!'

Now he wished he had prodded Jeremy to tell him just how badly the meeting with Dornfield did go. He would want to hear all about it before the CM and his ministers arrived; it could be close in time.

"12:55" he said aloud looking at the clock on his desk. 'Jeremy should be here no later than 2.'

...

Luscious Lane was early for her appointment. She was also very nervous although it only showed because James was babbling non-stop in her ear.

"Hey babe, we can handle this! We've got friends in high places. They'd never dare touch you because of what you might say. Aren't you glad we partied with all those guys? They owe you and now's the time to collect. Even Smythe doesn't want to see his political..."

"James, calm down before I shut you up. And you let me do the talking in here; I don't know why I let you talk me into bringing you along...do you understand?"

He grabbed her around the waist and squeezed tight. For the first time in a long time, she wasn't interested in his hug nor his wandering hand which had just found her breast line.

"Do I hear voices? Is that you ... Lady Lane?" It was Charles Scott calling through the closed door.

Luscious opened the door and winked at the older man.

"Lady, James .... please take a chair. What can I do for you on this

holiday?"

James moved his chair over to be close to his wife. She ignored him and took a sizeable breath.

"Councilor, I may have been a naughty girl," she teased.

Scott looked at her with mock horror. "Oh no, not Lady Lane!"

"Yes, and I'm afraid this time I wasn't in bed when I was naughty."

James laughed out loud and reached for his wife's hand. Scott was laughing as well. Luscious didn't crack even a hint of a smile.

'I have never understood this man,' Scott thought. 'He actually enjoys passing his own wife around to other men, often watching people copulate with her. How sick can he be?'

He looked aside at his watch, knowing full well it was just past 1. He'd have to move this along to keep the appointment with Avery.

"Let me guess. This has something to do with Mr. Harvey, telephones, and the investigation by the Governor's office. Yes?"

"Yes to all three. I was agent here on Portobello for the information we learned from the telephone taps."

"I suspected as much. Who did you sell it to?"

"Specifically?"

"No, not yet; just generically."

Luscious took another deep breath, heaving ample bosoms above the top line of her low cut dress.

"This may hurt, but lawyers were my best customers. And real estate people a close second. We also had some business people as clients, and the odd husband or wife trying to catch their mate at some peccadillo. And I'll be frank with you, I enjoyed the hell out of it!"

"Did it make much money?"

"Are you trying to pre-judge the size of your fee for defending me?"

Scott laughed again.

"No, just trying to get a feel for the operation's size."

"Well, what I got for my part had already been split several times. Harvey kept half for his organization abilities. He paid expenses, such as the apartment and the girl running the equipment out of the other half. What was left was split between poor Samuel Stubbs and myself."

"How much last month?"

"$2,300."

The attorney did some quick math on his calculator.

"Humm; that's maybe $12,000 total last month, perhaps more. Not bad..."

"Perhaps, but Harvey had some new electronic gadget coming in soon that would have changed every rule. He said once it was installed he could tap any phone on the island in 60 seconds time from any other place on the island, and, nobody would ever know it was happening. "

Scott was listening carefully to everything she said.

"So you did this and now you are afraid the police will come arrest you."

"Well, Harvey's gone and I understand Plentiful went with him. She did the same thing on Grand Turk I do here..."

"In more ways than one!" laughed Charles. James also found this very amusing.

"Perhaps. But I like to think I have more class than Plentiful."

"I doubt anyone ever addressed her as 'Lady Plentiful'" snickered the attorney.

"Then there was a girl on Grand Turk that worked part time, the girl here

and the two telephone techs; Stubbs here and Marvin Cox on Grand Turk. I think the business on Grand Turk was larger than here, judging by what Harvey said about the number of taps. But they got less money there than here."

"We all know the Grand Turk economy is depressed. This is all interesting but what does that say about you getting picked up for questioning?"

James broke in.

"How can they do that? Virtually every minister in government and half of the civil service people owe Luscious and me. They don't want..."

"James...I said I will handle this. OK?"

He withdrew his arm from her shoulder and scooted back in the chair, folding both hands on his lap.

"OK; I am sure even without cracking a statute book tapping telephones was an illegal act. But since you didn't actually do the taps...yes?"

"No, not me..."

"...then we move to privacy and confidentiality laws. As I see it, when you took information overheard on a telephone and sold it, you were violating at least two important laws. How did you get this information yourself?"

Luscious explained how she went to the apartment each night picking up tapes, returned to her home and checked contents. She selected information deemed valuable and either sold it to an existing customer or went on the street looking for an appropriate customer.

Scott was shaking his head from side to side.

"I almost wish you were the one making the taps and somebody else was doing what you did. I could argue a defense much more effectively. God!

Didn't you ever think about getting caught?"

"Not really. Harvey was very glib about it all and I guess I talked myself out of guilt because everyone on this island spreads gossip. Hell, Sindy Wicker even publishes a FAX gossip newsletter!"

"Even if she is not culpable, which I can't be sure of, the fact that she does this is no excuse for your doing what you did."

Luscious looked down at the floor.

"Is this big bad attorney lecture time?"

Scott scowled. "It's a little late for that, wouldn't you agree?"

She ~~shook~~ nodded her head in agreement.

"Do you want my real advice?"

"That's why I came here. Shoot."

"This hits very close to home in the CM's government. He can't afford to allow this to go very far..."

James broke in again. "See, I told you so!"

Scott raised his hand to silence the man.

"However, if I were Governor Burnside and I wanted to tear down the Smythe government, to make it impossible for Smythe to win the next election, I think I'd investigate this to the hilt hanging everyone I could identify as being a part of this."

"You think,..."

"I think it will be a week or more before this all sorts out. So here's my advice. You and James get on the next airplane out of this country and you stay away until I tell you to come back."

"You really think..."

"I do. If they can't find you to question, you are much better off.

If Harvey stays gone, if Plentiful stays gone, if Stubbs is dead ... that leaves just you and Cox to prosecute. If you disappear, that leaves Cox. I doubt white Governor Burnside will single out black Marvin Cox to hang up to dry."

He looked at his watch; 1:20.

"James, do you have your American Express card with you?"

James looked befuddled but reached for his back pocket. "Yes, you want to be paid now?"

"I don't take plastic. But Pan Am does. My best advice to you is leave here and go directly to the airport. Put this lady on the airplane departing in 90 minutes and if you can't go with her today, go no later than tomorrow. If they can't find Lady Lane, the next stop will be you."

James stood up, placing his hand back on his wife's shoulder.

"I can't believe this is happening, here on Portobello. We never thought anything about doing this here."

Now the attorney stood and walked around his desk, sliding himself onto the desk top just in front of Luscious.

"James, Luscious ... this is not the Portobello you two came to six or eight or ten years ago. Many of us came here because we could do things that we would never consider doing in the states," looking at Luscious, "or Canada," looking at James. "And back then when somebody did something like this, the community just sort of forgave and forgot. Because virtually everyone here was hiding from somebody or something, and most were living a fantasy life style they'd never get away with in civilization."

He paused for a breath.

"It is changing, isn't it?" suggested Luscious.

"Yes, it is. And it will change far faster in the next five years. Mark my words. It may be time for you, maybe even me, to find another Portobello where we can do wild and crazy things and that is the norm, not the exception.

"I don't mean to alarm you, but there is serious jail time and big upheavel in your life if they prosecute on this. I'll tell you one more thing; this may, if you are very lucky, be the last incident of this sort in this country where people just forget...and forgive."

"James, if you will get me to the airport right now...and then run home to pack a few things in hand carry bags, I'll get us seats."

"Charles, the plane has been running real full. Do you think...?"

"James, I think this is New Year's day; I'm betting they have seats. Hold on," and he reached for his phone and dialed the Pan Am number.

The phone rang for 30 seconds before being answered.

"Those damn people...they are the most inefficent...Hello, yes, this is Charles Scott. I want two seats on today's plane. Do you have them?"

Luscious now stood, pulling her dress down and readjusting her hips. James was staring at Scott unsure how frightened he should really be.

"Alright, the names are Lane; Mr. and Mrs. Lane. They are on the way. Please hold the seats."

"Thank you Charles," and Luscious stepped towards the man to throw her arms around his neck. She bent upward and nibbled on his cheek. 'Someday...' she whispered into his ear. Charles blushed and smiled.

"Get going, you two. And call me tomorrow, and each day until this sorts out."

James already had the door open. Luscious walked quickly to the door and

then turned to curtsey to Charles.

"Thank you again, Councilor" and she blew him a kiss, closing the door behind her kiss.

-30-

! STILL DON'T THINK CHPT 7 IS NECESSARY!

24

Chapter 24/// 693,077 bits = 30,133.782 per chapter; 18.826 pages per chpt.
1600.6586 bytes per page = (by 8) 200.08 words per page
= 86,634.64 words to end of chpt. 23; 99,012 @ 7;115,514 @ 6.

...

"Exchange synthesizer? Oh my!"

Jeremy fidgeted in silence while the Governor considered the implications. Martin leaned back in his chair with elbows on the arms tapping his mating fingertips together, gazing at the ceiling. Finally he spoke again.

"It simply must be somebody within Cable and Wireless. Recall Brewster made that ridiculous call to the Chief Minister starting this whole sequence in December. He may have spilt the beans about the synthesizer as well."

"I worry if Dornfield knows about that gadget, what he may also know."

"Yes, I believe we have to assume the titanic defense here."

"Oh?"

"Tip of the iceberg."

"Ahh! Yes, quite. If Brewster told someone, and they told Dornfield, let us suppose the CM also learns this. Let us also assume the CM does know or will learn we used wire tapping ourselves to gather evidence on Harvey. Where does that leave us?" He put his face down in his hands. The day had turned ugly.

Burkside had no immediate response. He was still thinking when Jeremy had a suggestion.

"What do we have to lose by simply calling Brewster on this?"

The Governor turned quickly to stare at his AG.

"Accuse him of breaking our confidence?"

Jeremy rose to pace. It didn't occur to him how much he looked like Smythe as he did so, moving his arms about to punctuate his statements.

"No, not at first. If we simply suggest to him there has been a leak and then tell him what Dornfield said, he should at first deny he had anything to do with it. If he spends more time denying he was at fault than coming to the issue of how do we deal with this, then I think we know he did it. And if he spends far too long denying his own culpability, well, we will have more reason to suspect he did it."

"And if he did? Then what?"

Jeremy stopped pacing and stood still. Presently he answered.

"Well...I don't know. I guess we decide how much we can continue to help Cable and Wireless in view of his own propensity to keep shooting himself in the foot. It may be that no matter how much we bend over backwards to bottle this up, he is going to hang his company anyhow."

"I see. In my report to White Hall, I simply say we tried to get them out of this but they insisted on being fools?"

"Something like that. After what we have been through, I am a tad discouraged where this leads us."

The Governor pushed his chair from the desk and rose. Now he too began to pace the floor. "What do you suppose the weather is like today in the South of England?"

Jeremy was sure he mis-understood.

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"Never mind. Just an idle thought. Let's get on with planning for the Chief Minister. He will want us to talk about the Dornfield problem; what do we tell him?"

"The truth. Or at least part of the truth. Let me say I visited with him, and found him to be very knowledgeable about what has happened. And we'll tell him your secret plan has been turned down by White Hall; that will help give it get some stature. Oh, that reminds me, what did happen to your secret plan?"

The Governor had forgotten all about his request to Avery. But he did know about Avery's mysterious collapse the evening before. Jeremy knew nothing about Avery's possible involvement; that Martin hadn't heard from the usually dependable Burgess was his own secret.

"Actually, it didn't work. Too bad, really. Circumstances."

"Sorry. Why do I have the feeling we are going into this meeting quite unprepared? We have no plan for Dornfield, and at the moment we have only hearsay evidence against this Lane woman. What do we tell the ministers we have accomplished in the last 24 hours?"

...

Charles Scott had been to the Burgess complex only one time since the family moved in; a brief visit to deliver some papers to Alton Burgess. The stories he had heard about the finish work and the size of the estate were all glowing, but typically filled with jealousy. Inside his mind, he was happy for Avery; 'Nobody here has worked harder to be a success' he thought as his car negotiated the front gate pillars.

Avery was poolside observing the afternoon diving exercises under the direction of the McClaskeys. This was the last afternoon; Doc and Susie had postponed leaving a day at a time but tomorrow was a definite leave date. Avery saw Charles pull up, stopping his car almost precisely where the ambulance had parked last evening. It occured to him Scott had not mentioned

his collapse on the telephone.

"Charles, over here!" he waved. The tall, lanky white haired man walked towards him carrying a file folder.

"This is really lovely, Avery" he beamed. The two shook hands warmly; old friends bent on rediscovering a mis-placed friendship.

Avery pointed at the diving platform. "That's my grand-daughter; Alton's. She may have special skills as a diver and my guests, Doctor and Susie McClaskey, from the University of Michigan, are working with her. I pray by the time she is 16 she may be of Olympic caliber."

Scott caught on quickly. "The first Olympic entrant from the Turks and Caicos Islands?"

"Perhaps. Or perhaps...from some other, new country?"

Scott looked from Avery's face towards the ground. His pulse quickened at the thought. He realized he would be 71 in 2000; hopefully still alive to see how it all turned out.

Both men stood watching the training platform silently. When Rose knifed into the water with barely a ripple, Avery began clapping with the McClaskeys. Scott joined in.

"Shall we go inside?" Avery asked beckoning towards the office door. Scott nodded and followed.

"I believe I told you about a special place I designed into this building; where my family and I would be protected in the event of a hurricane?"

"Or a nuclear war as I recall."

"I want to show it to you but I am ashamed to have to ask you to keep its existence or details to yourself. I feel like even asking you to do this is

betraying our friendship."

The attorney was impressed. He had never heard any talk of this place from anyone and he assumed, correctly, that was because nobody, or at most very few, had ever seen it.

"Quite the contrary; my lips are sealed and I take great pride in your sharing it with me."

Avery beckoned for Charles to follow him into the closet and neither man said a word as Avery went through the sequence of opening both doors. When the battery-operated lights flipped on, revealing the front room, Charles let out a low whistle.

"War Games," he said softly.

"Pardon?"

"I said 'War Games'; for some reason I am reminded of the inside of that mountain in Colorado where the U.S. hides all of their commanders in case there is a nuclear attack from Russia. This is ...very, very impressive!".

Avery was smiling. "Well, actually, I had alot of help designing this. One of the people involved did claim he created some underground SAC control centers."

Scott stood beside Avery and put his hand on his shoulder. "It shows. And I now better understand why it would not do for anyone on this island to even know it exists. I don't think most people would understand why you did it."

But Scott knew. Avery had taught himself to be a survivor, a lesson most natives knew well after nearly two centuries of being abandoned on a tiny chain of coral islands. Only, Avery Burgess had resources the average native

could not dream about, much less count to. And he was applying those resources to the fine art of staying alive, in any eventuality.

Avery switched on the commercial power lights and walked to the dining table. His two envelopes lay open at one end, twin piles of paper half-sheets neatly positioned in the middle.

"A soda?" he asked, pulling out a chair.

"Yes, but point me towards them. I'll be the waiter."

Avery smiled broadly and directed him to the refrigerator against a wall.

Scott was filled with questions but didn't want to pry, nor get Avery started on a long explanation of the facility. Scott knew there was so much pride attached to where they were Avery could probably talk an hour or more about it without drawing a breath.

"I assume Bill...Conner never saw this? He would've really enjoyed it. This is his sort of creation."

Avery's lips turned down and he tapped a finger to the corner of his eye. The thought of Bill's death coupled with Charles' comment had brought small tears to his eyes.

"Mostly on paper altho he did see it when I was starting the foundations. And actually, there are alot of his ideas here. He designed all of the electronic systems; I followed his plans totally. You know, I still have trouble handling that he is...gone."

Charles desparately wanted to say something. ('No, this is not the time. It will wait.')

"Here, two sodas. Now, shall we see if we can piece together a puzzle?"

...

"Robin? This is Martin Burnside. I am sorry to bother you at home on a

holiday; I think this important."

Lewster had hoped for such a call. Aware the AG was going to Portobello to interrogate the Rigby woman, he yearned for details.

"Yes, how did the Rita Rigby interview go?"

"That. Well, Jeremy didn't learn a great deal, actually. Rigby apparently led a sheltered life inside of the apartment; she never met nor heard talk of the sales agent over there."

Robin's disappointment was obvious. "Drat."

"The AG did make one startling discovery however and I'd like your reaction to it."

Jeremy bit his lip listening to the Governor; 'that is certainly laying it on the line!' he thought.

"Go on."

"He met with Benjamin Dornfield; I believe I mentioned to you our concerns that Dornfield's next newspaper could set us back several paces."

Robin was very grateful for the Governor's concern in this area. The last thing Cable and Wireless wanted was another dose of poison ink from the tip of Dornfield's pen.

"Yes?"

"He learned that Dornfield knows about...the exchange synthesizer."

"What!!! How in the bloody hell could he know? That's preposterous! Why nobody knows about that but Brown, Seybold, myself and you chaps. I suppose he knows about how we used it too!"

A cassette recorder in the Governor's desk was capturing every breath and word from Robin. Later he would listen and re-listen to the conversation, along with his AG.

"I can't say that. As I understand it, when Dornfield asked about the exchange synthesizer Jeremy was so flustered he didn't know how to respond. In fact, he cut short the conversation and headed directly back here afraid to say another word."

There was a silence on the line.

"Robin?"

"Yes, I am still here; trying to collect my thoughts. Damn! That is a bad throw. I'm quite speechless, really." Both men were thinking.

'I gave the Governor that damned box' he thought. 'If it gets into the paper that such a box exists and how it works, the entire country will demand my hide. And there will be ~~crys~~ cries that no telephone conversation is safe. We could be in real trouble here!'

The Governor half expected the silent period to end with some sort of excuse from Robin; an attempt to cover the corporate Cable and Wirless ass, as it were. He was surprised when Robin spoke again.

"What is it the Americans say, the best defense is a strong offense?. Perhaps if we make a clean breast of everything, and explain our actions, before Dornfield can get his damned newspaper printed..." and he paused.

"That is a possibility. But let's not throw in the sponge yet. Think about it and we can talk later. My immediate problem is a meeting with Smythe in about 15 minutes, OK?"

"Yes. Would you like me to pop over for Smythe?"

"No, I think not. But I'll give you a report. 'Til then?"

"Quite. Good-bye."

...

"How would you like to do this?" asked Scott, taking his own set of

envelopes from the folder.

"Your's is not open yet?" noticed Avery.

"No, they are just the way Joshua's wife taped them shut in my office. He and Bill did a draft of our last meeting together and after Bill...left, Josh did a final version. His wife brought it down on her final trip, after he died.

Avery was shaking his head. "It was so strange to lose them both within a few months. Let me ask you something important; do you think we have any right opening these up and reading them, with Bill and Joshua gone?"

Scott had asked himself the same question several times over past few hours.

"Yes, I think that's why Josh finished this after Bill .... If he thought it was a dead issue, pardon the pun, I doubt he would have completed his work following Bill's ... well, departure."

Scott was having alot of trouble stringing 'Bill' and 'dead/died' together in the same sentence. Sooner or later he was going to have to tell Avery.

"OK, my second question. We were a team. Two things ran through my mind today when I held these envelopes in my hand. First, it was going to take all four of us ... everything we individually knew ... to not botch this. Now we are two, not four..."

"Avery-"

Burgess raised his hand to stop Charles.

"Last, but hardly least; the plan was current in 1988. Now it is 1991 and this island has changed a great deal in two and a half years. So has the world around us. The U.N. that Joshua knew so well in 1988 is not the same

U.N. we have today. Just look at how the United States and Russia are now buddies, for example..."

His voice faded off at the end and Scott fingered his own unopened envelopes; finally he responded.

"Look, suppose we could find someone to replace Joshua; somebody that believes in our plan, who knows his or her way around the U.N.?"

Avery looked directly at Charles who stared at the envelopes in his hand.

"Do you really think that is possible?"

"I do"; He didn't mention he thought Joshua's wife, also a news wire reporter covering the U.N., might be a candidate.

"Well, that could make a difference. I just can't see me marching around the halls of the U.N. trying to button hole delegates about our independence problem. They'd think I was some sort of nut!"

Charles laughed and now looked at Avery. "I can't see myself doing it either, but I wouldn't mind going along, like Bill did, if we had someone to open doors and pave the way for us."

"OK, so perhaps there is a replacement of sorts for Joshua. But Conner..."

"Avery," and he took a very deep breath. "Avery ... if we get this going again, I can promise you I have an answer to Bill's...absence. Everything Bill used to contribute, everything he added, can be ... found again."

Avery studied Charles' face closely. 'I trust this man, but he could be selling me the Brooklyn Bridge. Once we commit to this, I am the point man; the one the British and the elected politicians will come after. If we go down in defeat, Charles can run away, back to Canada. I am stuck here and I will pay handsomely for my indescretions...'.

Scott was pretty sure what Avery was thinking.

"Look, I know I am asking you to take alot on faith. And we don't even go to the same church!"

Avery belly laughed.

"You don't go to any church!"

They both laughed.

"No, but I do follow a faith none the less. It might surprise you! Anyhow, let's open these envelopes and see what our instructions are. Then we can decide what to do."

Avery reached for the envelopes in Scott's hands, tearing the ends free of the tape. He noticed the tape on this set of envelopes was yellowed but not brittle.

"OK, page one of envelope one. Why don't you read it aloud?"

...

"Your Excellency. The Honourable Chief Minister Orville Smythe, the Honourable Minister William Stanfield, the Honourable Minister Stanley Hardgraves await your pleasure!" The uniformed guard snapped the Governor a salute and stepped back briskly.

"Mr. Chief Minister" greeted the Governor standing just inside his office door; "Mr. Standfield, Mr. Hardgraves" shaking the hand of each. The ministers greeted the Governor, and then the Attorney General. Each found the same chair he had occupied in the prior day's meeting. Upstairs, Mindy Bunrside listened intently in her earphones and watched the VU meter needles bounce as the men exchanged small talk and sat down.

"Refreshments, gentlemen?"

Nobody was hungry nor thirsty. Smythe patted his coat pocket for the

comforting presence of a micro-cassette recorder. Pushing his fingertips against his coat pocket, he detected the familiar whir of the small tape drive against his chest.

The CM spoke first.

"We know this is a traditional holiday for you as well as us; and we appreciate that you have been working throughout the day on our mutual problems."

"Yes, well I wish we could report solid progress" began the Governor. "Actually, this may turn out to be one of those days when, as they say, we should have all stayed in bed!"

Standfield was showing obvious displeasure at being in the meeting; having some difficulty getting comnfortable in his chair. His body moved and moved again trying to find an acceptable position.

"Jeremy, can you bring us up to date following your visit to Portobello?" asked the Governor.

"Certainly," ~~and~~ He stayed in his chair but looked directly at the CM. "I interviewed a lady named Rita Rigby this morning. She was the employee who operated the clandestine recording equipment in the burned out apartment. What I learned was mostly mechanical. She saw Harvey in there on two occasions only. She says he worked on equipment and talked with Stubbs; she was told to leave the room when he was there. I don't feel she should be prosecuted; she says she never listened to telephone calls herself, never had anything to do with the intelligence part of it."

Minister Hardgraves was relieved to hear this although he said nothing. Rita Rigby was his first cousin.

The CM used Jeremy's pause to ask a question.

"Surely this Rigby woman gave you the name of the agent there; the person who did the actual trading in the information?"

"No, Harvey had it arranged so the recorded tapes were left in a container and somebody always came in to get them from the container after Rita left for the day. She never saw anyone ... she actually thought Stubbs was taking them."

The CM showed a faint trace of a smile; Standfield's smile was far more obvious.

"Then we have no lead on this agent person?" the CM asked again.

The Governor noticed the smile and possible look of relief on Standfield's face. Martin answered.

"If I may Jeremy ... actually we do have a lead," and he looked directly at Standfield. He hoped Jeremy was now looking at Smythe as they had agreed they would do.

"We have information suggesting to us a white lady...a Mrs. Luscious Lane ... sold the information on Portobello."

The CM reacted with an audible gasp. Standfield diverted his eyes to the far wall and stared ahead blankly.

Finally the CM responded.

"Oh, I think not. Mrs. Lane may be many things, not all of them good. But to actually sell information stolen from the telephones, I cannot believe that!" Smythe now himself looked at Standfield. He wanted his minister to join her defense but Standfield's eyes remained riveted to the far wall. Smythe knew Standfield and others in government enjoyed the favours of the Lane woman. 'Thank God I never indulged,' he told himself.

The room was quiet; Jeremy and Martin trying to memorize the facial and

hand reactions of each minister for later discussion, Martin spoke again.

"Well, at this point the evidence is not air-tight. Chief Minister, I realize James Lane has been a favourite of your government for planning work. And before I attempt to interrogate either of them, I want your input."

Smythe pushed himself up from the chair and began to walk about. 'Is this a trap?' he pondered. 'Or, is the Governor really interested in protecting my ministers and government?' He decided he was grateful for the opportunity to consider the matter in advance.

"I am still going to defend the Lanes; both of them. But surely you have some strong evidence or you wouldn't be telling me ... us ... this. So I have to at least consider the possibility this Lane woman is guilty. Which brings us to what do we do about questioning her; you haven't yet? Are you giving us ... me ... a choice in this matter?"

"I may have no choice but to question her. Actually, we wouldn't make a decision about questioning her husband until after we talked with her. But, yes, he is a possibility as well. Even if he didn't participate in her ... activity, if he but knew about it, well, as an ex-pat it could go hard on him."

Standfield desparately wanted to bolt out of the room and telephone a warning to the Lanes. He was feeling very uncomfortable. Perhaps...

"Is this all there is to report, after a full day's activity?" Standfield asked, not masking the anger in his voice. " I think I may wish to discuss this with Mr. Smythe, privately, before we render an opinion..."

Smythe answered for the Governor who was on the verge of saying something.

"Oh, I'm sure there is more to tell us. Dornfield, for example?" He was still standing. He was also relishing the discomfort of Standfield; a man who aspired to lead the party, pushing Smythe aside in the process.

The Governor now spoke.

"Yes, I was just about to explain Dornfield. Unfortunately, Mr. Standfield's excellent suggestion that I exercise my executive powers of national security was turned thumbs down by London. Unless we have a declared civil or wartime emergency, my powers do not extend to the press."

Both Smythe and Standfield were shaking their heads in agreement. Standfield had spent several hours researching the same matter in a local lawyer's office this morning, coming to an identical conclusion; something he had shared with the CM.

The Governor continued. "Jeremy visited with Dornfield today. I'm afraid this is my best example of why we might have been better off staying in bed."

Jeremy picked up the cue and glanced at his notes. He was going to stick to the script he and the Governor hammered out just prior to the meeting.

"The Governor's private plan we suggested yesterday also failed today so I decided at his suggestion to simply drop in on Dornfield. Now what I am about to tell you must, unfortunately, be sketchy and I ask you to take it at face value. There are certain aspects of this, dealing with national security, I cannot elaborate upon."

Standfield was once again tiring of the phrase 'national security'. 'Each time they want to hide something from us, they bring out the national security flag. This isn't even their country; who's national security do they think it is, anyhow!'

"In the telephone world there is something known by the technical name exchange synthesizer. I can only tell you this is a sort of ... test equipment piece. With this, it is possible for someone to monitor any telephone without actually connecting wires to the line.

"Cable and Wireless brought this piece of test equipment to Grand Turk to help us run down the culprits. The Governor authorized its use and only the Governor or I operated it. And we did so only for the intended purpose; gathering information about Mr. Harvey's activities."

Smythe stopped Jeremy; something he would not normally do.

"Let me better understand. This thing is called an ...exchange...what?"

"Synthesizer; an exchange synthesizer."

The word was difficult for Smythe to say. "OK, so with it, I think I understand it's possible to simply connect-into any phone in this country; and eaves drop on that line?"

Jeremy picked it up again.

"That's almost correct. Actually, if the synthesizer is physically located here on Grand Turk, it can only work with phones served by this exchange. You have to move it to Portobello, for example, to do the same thing there."

"You can do this without going to the telephone office?"

"Yes. When we were gathering information on Mr. Harvey, we did so from here at Waterloo."

Smythe was growing irritated.

"I don't like the sound of this at all! First we have people running wires all over the telephone exchange so they can listen in; now you tell me there is a piece of test equipment that accomplishes the same thing from

this very office?"

"Quite."

Smythe stopped pacing and folded his hands before his chest.

"Please continue."

"Yes, well. As you might understand, the existence of this piece of equipment was a matter of national security. Two engineers from London, who brought it, plus Robin Lewster knew about it at Cable and Wirless. For our part, only the Governor, myself...and oh yes, the Chief Secretary knew about it." Jeremy had decided not to mention Mindy or John Burnside.

"I am listening" urged Smythe.

"When I met with Mr. Dornfield today, he asked me about it."

"What it...this exchange thing?"

"Precisely. He asked me about the exchange synthesizer."

Standfield wasted no time reacting.

"Those bastards at Cable and Wireless; they told him!"

His words hung in the air while each considered that possibility. The Governor now spoke.

"Actually, I had the same first reaction. And I called Lewster on the carpet with the same accusation. Gentlemen, I do not believe Lewster nor anyone else at at the telephone company told Dornfield about this."

Smythe had an opinion.

"I must agree. Dornfield scares Lewster's bladder dry. No, that is an improbable connection. So I am afraid, and I dislike saying this, that you" pointing at the Governor, "you" pointing at the AG "or our Chief Secretary spilled the beans."

Standfield sprung to life.

"And technology has just upgraded the science of wire tapping. Now anyone with the exchange sythesizer can tap any other phone at will. Gone is all evidence of physical tapping, gone is any need for a person to be a telephone company employee. My God, with this you could sit here in the privacy of this office and listen to Mr. Smythe or myself all day long every day and we'd never know it!"

The Governor had worried this might be their reaction. He could feel Standfield contriving the alarm, but sooner or later it would have come out.

"Gentlemen! Please. Let us not get the cart before the horse. Can we return to the original problem; Mr. Dornfield mentioned this to our attorney general. Regardless of how he knew, and I assure you none of us told a soul, we are facing a lambasting in the paper this coming weekend none of us wants."

Standfield was not through.

"Today's exotic test instrument becomes tomorrow's $99.95 Radio Shack special. I think the least we can ask is some assurance that Cable and Wireless, or the telephone company that replaces them, can put a stop to this!"

It was now getting far afield and the Governor had to stop it.

"Mr. Standfield, your point is well taken. I assure you the AG and I are no less concerned than you. But this must be a matter for another day. We won't solve this one here, now. On the other hand, we might figure something out about Dornfield."

Smythe found himself now believing the Governor was correct. Dornfield's report had to be stopped, 'at any cost'. Actually, what he was thinking about was just as illegal as telephone tapping; a fire.

"If we can't supress Dornfield's story, what are our chances of taking matters into our own hands?"

"Such as?" wondered the Governor.

"Well, I understand the Portobello fire department did a magnificent job of arresting the apartment fire before it got out of hand. Perhaps they could use a bit more practice?"

The Governor bolted from his chair.

"I am going to pretend I didn't hear you say that! Mr. Smythe, you are the Chief Minister of this country, sir!"

Smythe folded his hands behind his back; a signal. And took several steps backwards from the Governor. 'Yes' he smiled 'and I intend to stay the Chief Minister.'

"Very well, but accidents do happen. If the British can't control the events that threaten to engulf all of us, well ..."

...

Charles Scott turned slowly looking up at Avery. "That's the end of the first envelope's contents. I must say, I am impressed. Josh did a lot of leg work at the U.N., apparently after Bill...left Portobello. I think that pretty well answers for us how he felt about this continuing, even with Bill gone."

Avery's eyes were locked in a distant stare. Finally he spoke.

"That man was very unselfish" he began, tears welling in his eyes. "He knew he was approaching the end of his own life, yet look what he did for us. I am very moved..."

Neither man spoke for several more minutes. And finally Avery said "No matter how insecure I feel about our ability to handle this, the words you

have just read give me strength. Right this minute, I know it will work; I know we can do it. My God is telling me I must do this."

And he continued. "Yes, it will be done. But it may be the most difficult task I have undertaken in my lifetime."

Avery turned and took Charles' hand; staring intently at the lawyer's face. Charles' eyes now found Avery's.

"Your health, how is it?" Avery asked.

Charles took a deep breath and answered.

"I have a physical, a thorough one at the Cleveland Clinic, each year. I am 61 and counting. So far I've escaped all of the common male diseases and I awake each morning filled with piss and vinegar. I think we can get at least four or five more years out of this body."

Avery shook his head in agreement. He had never known Charles to be sick or bedridden in the ten years on Portobello. But the sudden loss of Bill, and the not entirely unexpected loss of Joshua were preying on his mind. 'It is one thing to be a partnership; quite something else to suddenly be alone' he thought.

"I think I am ready to deal with the second envelope; shall we?"

Charles pulled his hand out of Avery's grip and reached for the unopened brown envelope. Two piles were laid side by side and Charles began to read from the first pages.

-30-

25

Chapter Twenty Five

Dornfield's first edition of the new year went together rapidly following Jeremy's departure. Todd, Benjamin's son, came in to operate the darkroom facility and already more than a third of all page flats were photographed and in negative form. At this rate they would be finished with all 48 pages by midnight.

His last story to be written was the complicated inter-woven affair involving Cable and Wireless, Harvey and the death of Stubbs. Benjamin had decided to banner headline the front page with the original accusations against the British made by the CM, running this story in the far right hand column. A photo of the burned remains of the apartment was spread across two columns with a stock photo of the CM to its right. Related stories of the death of Stubbs, the disappearence of Harvey and an explanatory piece describing wire tapping at work would run vertically down the columns below the photos.

The actual paste up flats no longer went to Miami; he had experienced far too many problems with type moving on flats or actually falling off during transit to continue shipping bulky artboard to Miami. Rather, by completing the paste up and photographing one page at a time, he reduced the bulk to a third by shipping a negative for each page. This also sped up the printing process because now the printer could combine the pages making up a press run, strip the negatives together, and burn offset plates in a single step. This alone often amounted to saving a full day in turn around time.

The completed negatives, with curt instructions attached, went inside of a canvass art bag of the style used by artists to convey partially finished or completed renderings from place to place. Benjamin either gave the hand

carry bag to a passenger traveling from Portobello to Miami, to be met by a representative from the printer at the exit of Miami Customs, or he carried it himself when he found a companion need to travel to South Florida. All of this fell into a familiar pattern as the evening wore on.

...

Lionel Ashworth had led a charmed life. Many considered him to be a bridge between Turks and Caicos generations. Now a man of 55, Ashworth had been a politician, a fisherman, a plumber, an refrigeration system repairman and a sailor in the American merchant marine. A large man given to consuming huge meals four or five times each day, he had once served as Minister of Education for the islands; a singularily astonishing feat for a man who could neither read nor write beyond his own signature.

Ashworth had been a political activist in the mid to late 70's; a period of transition when the British first experimented with allowing natives in the islands to assume a limited degree of self government. Ashworth was on occasion charismatic and had learned all of the pass words to political success of that era; words such as 'independence', 'freedom' and phrases like 'throw out the British slave masters'. His own lack of formal education was not a deterrent to political success; the constituents he served from a poor backwater section on Grand Turk generally could not read nor write either.

Ashworth followed one creed with religious fanatacism; 'do unto others before they do unto you.' It was during his political party's absence from power in the early 1980s that he fine-tuned this creed to include fire. A British begun inquiry into alleged nepotism during the GDP rule of the late 70s had culminated in sealed indictments against a number of then GDP politicians;

Ashworth included. The results were to be announced on a Monday morning.

Late on the evening preceding the scheduled announcement a mysterious fire devasted the government's ancient wooden building housing all official records of the inquiry; as well as the philatelic division of government. The records destroyed, the Monday indictments were never made public; Ashworth and others within the party had breathed easier for a few days.

Then a second British inquiry had been launched; this one into the fire itself. After two years of gathering statements and evidence, the Brits came to the conclusion there was 'significant circumstantial evidence' against various members of the GDP including, again, Ashworth. But there was no direct evidence to link the politicians to the fire.

The second British query finally released its decision; this time from the safety of London where they felt records were more protectable. In those findings, Lionel Ashworth was deemed 'inappropriate as a future elected leader' and summarily barred from ever again running for public office.

When Smythe led the GDP to victory in 1988, Ashworth was behind the scenes guiding the campaign. Although he could not himself run for office, nothing stopped his influencing those who did run nor in creating a spoils system for himself immediately following the election.

Lionel Ashworth was considered "amusing" and "entertaining" by the whites who knew him. His recollection of island history, frequently sprinkled with anecdotes shaped by his own many biases, were especially popular with ex-pats who believed a friendship with Lionel was a passport to fewer hassles for their own lives in the islands. Lionel was best known for his 'children'; he claimed to have fathered 57 and asserted he would proceed to procreate no less than one for each new year of his life. If the number of

children was not noteworthy, his plan for each child was.

"I have childs in 28 countries," he would explain. "Each child to be politician. When time proper, each of my childs take over own country and they proclaim me King!"

'King?' first time listeners would ask. "King of what?"

"King of world, of course!"

No-one ever accused Lionel of being a man who lacked vision.

Lionel spent New Year's night devouring several pounds of lobster and fresh fish at Fast Eddie's restaurant; a gathering spot for people on the edge of politics, and the law, on Portobello. A late afternoon telephone call from Grand Turk had alerted him to a special meeting that evening. His ample belly full, he was ready to meet with the messenger coming from the nation's capital. To those around him, he had been proclaiming all evening "when I finish eating, I take my boat fishing." Each person in Fast Eddie's that evening had heard him say this at least three times.

...

"Good morning; it is 7 AM and this is the WIV first edition news for Tuesday, January 2nd, 1990.

"The second apartment building fire in four days roared through the Central Square complex on Leeward Highway early this morning. The building, owned by a company headed by David Whitebourn, was virtually leveled in the rear apartment and office sections. Shops to the front, including Stop 'N Shop, suffered smoke and water damage. With the first light of dawn, police and fire rescue personnel began digging through the rubble looking for possible fire victims.

"The fire began in an apartment at the south end of the building,

directly above the offices of the Turks and Caicos Islands Gazette newspaper. When fire fighters arrived, just after 3 AM, the entire top floor and approximately half of the downstairs was engulfed in flames. Several dozen people living in the upstairs apartments had evacuated before firemen arrived and the fire department concentrated on preventing the spread of fire to the commercial shops in the front area.

"As of this newscast neither the fire nor police departments will venture any statements as to the cause of fire. The buildings were of cement block construction with wooden floors, inside wall partitions and roof. The scene this morning is of smoldering water soaked remains hanging precariously between charred block walls with personnel slowly prodding through the debris searching for bodies.

"Chief Minister Orville Smythe announced late yesterday his government will replace Minister of Natural Resources Lawrence Harvey with a new appointee as soon as next Monday. Minister Harvey, according to Smythe's office, has requested a leave of absence from his ministerial post because of the press of personal business activities. One source has told WIV news Harvey left the country this past Sunday for Haiti.

"More island news after this message from Turks and Caicos National Airlines."

...

Lionel Ashworth sat on the rear deck of his 28 foot cabin cruiser sippin on a cup of coffee while listening to the morning news. Two companions, young Haitian men in their early 20s, piloted the boat and stood watch at the bow to warn of coral heads in their path. Ashworth had boarded the boat just after 3 AM, and without running lights it quietly stole away from Sout

Dock heading southwest. When the first morning rays broke the night darkness, 'Freedom IV' lay just west of the uninhabited island of West Caicos. In the fish box were nearly a dozen recently caught Snapper, Grouper and one Barracuda;, some still thrashing about craving their own freedom.

"Drop anchor!" Lionel ordered. With the swells from the northwest, Freedom IV would shortly point into the waves and lay with its stern pointing towards the southern tip of West Caicos.

Moments later, the boat snug to the anchor line, he issued his second order; "Break out lines!" Two rods with reels and lures attached came out of the cabin and went into the water to the southeast. The boat was positioned just outside the steep wall under the surface where a line of coral reefs separated the 15 foot shallow water from the 600 foot drop off. This was where Lionel did his best fishing.

Thirty minutes after his lures went into the water, the first chartered fishing boat of the day, loaded with hopeful white tourists, should poke its nose around the tip of northwest point and head towards Freedom IV. When it arrived and dropped its own anchor, Lionel would show off the fish box filled with catches and brag how good fishing had been, just after midnight.

...

Benjamin Dornfield slept in, missing the 7 AM first edition news. Shortly before 8 there was an anxious knock on his door. Benjamin ignored the racket at first, only partially conscious he had a visitor.

"Benjamin, wake up! It's Manny. Benjamin...I know you're in there. Get up!"

Twenty-five year old Manuel Morgan was too inexperienced to realize how he and his NDC party leaders were being used by Dornfield. Outspoken,

aggressive, and smart, Manny had taken over the national party leadership of the 'loyal opposition' following the aftermath of the arrest of former CM Nat Simpson. Dornfield's paper had backed Smythe and company in the election, but within a year Dornfield was carping at the GDP on nearly every issue. He and Manny had formed a friendship based upon their mutual distrust and hate for Smythe's politics and now Dornfield eagerly sought out Morgan's opinion for print whenever he wanted the paper to blast Smythe or his cronies. Morgan's inexperience was such that Dornfield knew just exactly how to pull his strings; Dornfield could get Morgan all worked up over an issue and then quote or partially quote Morgan's reactions as a tool to attack Smythe and the GDP. Morgan genuinely believed Dornfield was going to back he and his party in the 1992 elections; he was of course wrong on this count. Dornfield had his own political party in mind, and for now, Morgan was nothing more than a tool to make the GDP look as bad as possible. When the time arrived for Dornfield's party to announce, Morgan too would feel the onslaught of attacks from Dornfield's pen.

"Who's that?" Dornfield called out sleepily.

"It's Manny...let me in, hurry!"

Dornfield glanced at the bedside alarm clock; 7:55 AM.

"OK, just a minute" he grumbled pulling on a pair of trousers over boxer shorts and stumbling towards the duplex's front door.

"A fire, another fire!" Manny was shouting; "and you are really not going to like this one!"

Dornfield swung the door open still groggy from sleep. Manny pushed past him and into the kitchen.

"No coffee?" he demanded searching the counter top for a cup.

"Hey mon, I just get up. You woke me. Now what's this about another fire?"

Manny liked to be the first to tell news; it went with his own concerns that at 25 he was too young to be as successful as he already was. He needed to have people tell him he was bright and capable. It reassured him. That was the big reason he liked Dornfield; each issue of the paper quoted his thoughts on some important issue and Dornfield was his mouthpiece. Dornfield made him look important, and smart.

"Your office has burned down" he blurted out. "A total..."

"Jesus Christ!" Dornfield almost never took the lord's name in vain. "Tell me more!"

"It started around 3 this morning, in the apartment above your office. Every apartment on the top floor, most of your floor burned to rubble. There is nothing left; nothing!"

"How did it start?"

"They don't know yet. And there could be deaths; police and fire people are all over it right now searching the remains. And your office...well, it will be a while before you publish a paper again!"

'Perhaps' thought Dornfield. He looked to the kitchen table; 'yes, there is the canvas bag; at least the next issue will be on time.' "Do you still have your 35 millimeter camera in your car?"

"Yes, but why?"

"All of my cameras are...were in the office. Give me a minute to throw on some clothes and let's get down there!"

...

Govenor and Mindy Burnside had awoke at their usual 6:58 to catch the

first edition news. Martin said not a word as he listened to the reports but when the news broke for a commercial, he headed straight to his office and telephoned the AG. Mindy was right behind him and stood outside his door, fearful he might suffer a repeat of Sunday's hyper-tension.

He and the AG talked for ten minutes and Burnside then sat in his office chair alone for nearly 30 more minutes. Mindy brought him hot tea and a sweet roll but thought better of disturbing him with more than a warm kiss to his forehead.

Finally the Governor reached for a telephone and dialed a Portobello number.

"Burgess here."

"Avery, Governor Burnside."

"Security?"

"Yes, please" and both scrambling units switched on in near unison. The Governor spoke first.

"I often wondered" he began "why with your intense interest in business you never went into the insurance field. Now I think I know why."

Avery was smiling to himself but his voice didn't show it.

"Fire insurance rates in particular will probably sky rocket here."

"Have you seen it?"

"No, not yet. Alton is down looking now and will bring me back a videotape. I try to stay away from crowds as I am sure there are."

Burnside sipped on his tea which was now cooling rapidly inspite of Mindy's handknit cozy that wrapped the pot.

"I don't suppose, then, you have any idea how it might have started?"

"Not yet, but I can't say as I will be too unhappy that a certain

publisher may be out of business for awhile."

The Governor's top teeth sunk into his lower lip. He didn't realize he was doing this to himself until there was pain.

"Yes, quite. Frankly Avery, that the paper office burned is very concerning to me."

Burgess was taken back. He knew the Governor had no love for either the paper nor its publisher. 'I'd think he'd be delighted' he thought to himself.

"I'm afraid I don't understand that statement..."

"Look, in the past 24 hours there have been some ...well, expressions from certain quarters about burning down the paper office. I didn't take them as seriously as perhaps I might have. Now it is an accomplished fact, well ..."

Avery was now even more intrigued. He could think of a number of people or concerns who would be pleased if the newspaper never returned. 'Including the Governor!' he thought to himself. 'But who, in the last day or so, would suggest a fire for the newspaper?'

"If you are asking me to help you find who did it, I'm afraid I can't be much help ... unless you care to give me more background."

Actually, the Governor didn't care to do this. 'Perhaps in person' he thought, 'but never on this damned telephone.'

"You remember, of course, the fire that burned down the philatelic (the what?) building?"

"Yes."

"I don't suppose you could find out for me whether a certain individual now living on Portobello might have been on the island...at say 3 AM this

morning?"

'Lionel Ashworth,' thought Avery, correctly. 'Almost everyone believed him responsible for the Grand Turk government building fire.'

"Yes, I believe I can do that. But why him?"

"I'm afraid that must wait until I see you in person; suffice to say there is a connection between my request and the threat I heard yesterday. Oh, Avery?"

"Yes?"

"I didn't mean to overlook this ...how are you feeling?"

Burgess took an extra breath. 'If he really wanted to know how I was, he might have called yesterday.'

"I'm fine now; probably just some bad fish. Our government health inspector is not doing as good a job as I would like," he answered, knowing full well the Governor's office was already under pressure on this issue.

"Ah yes; I agree. And I'm pleased you are better. Will you call when you know something?"

"Yes, of course. Good day."

"Cheerio."

Burnside sat reflecting on the call. He almost forgot to switch off the scrambler unit but finally remembered. 'Maybe Avery's health is not all that good,' he considered, 'and he certainly did not sound his usual self. I wonder if there is something else there?'

...

A crowd of perhaps 100 gathered around the fire truck and two police vehicles when Morgan pulled his Mercedes 220 sedan to a stop behind several cars. He noticed Alton Burgess videotaping the remains and WIV newsman

Robert Manchester talking with a portable recorder to a police officer.

Dornfield sat in stunned silence inside the car. He had expected damage but nothing close to what he now saw. His hands went through the familiar mechanical act of removing a roll of color film Manny had in his camera and reloading a roll of fast black and white carried in his pocket. Then he flipped the camera over resetting the automatic exposure control for ASA 400 speed film.

"Come on Ben, the competition is getting the jump on you!"

Morgan ran to the passenger side, threw open the door and pulled Dornfield from the car. His feet on the ground, all of the familiar trained instincts came back; he began trotting towards his old office area, the camera bouncing against his chest.

What he saw was devastating. Not a shred of paper was unburned and tons of water reduced the charred scrap to a soupy mess. He could pick out pieces of familiar utensils; the composing machine, a cherished manual typewriter he first bought in Nassau, the melted remains of his drafting table frame and file cabinets scorched or melted into piles of rubble. His reflexes were pointing the camera, adjusting the focus and snapping the shutter.

A ladder against the roof of a nearby unburned storage building invited him to climb higher for a better overall picture. Manny watched as Dornfield did all of the things a trained journalist is supposed to do. After ten shots, he was back down the ladder.

"Come on; let's get some statements," and he headed for the policeman still talking with WIV's Manchester. He caught the end of the conversation.

"We now done search; there no bodies. Nobody die, nobody get hurt. We very lucky." Manchester thanked the man and moved away, not quite sure how

he should interview Dornfield about the loss of his newspaper.

The policeman was nervous in front of the WIV recorder; he was now glad to see Dornfield. He could handle a newspaper interview much better.

"Lieutenent," Benjamin began "how long before we will know how it started?"

"How it start? I tell you now where it start. How it start...maybe many days; maybe never."

"Where did it start?"

The policeman pointed his finger directly above the rubble of the newspaper office.

"People say fire start there. Nobody in apartment, it empty. It start above your office."

Dornfield made a mental note to find out who last occupied the apartment.

"And nobody was hurt?"

"We very lucky; not even fireman."

A new vehicle, a brown colored van, was pulling up behind Manny's Mercedes. A woman climbed out while a man stayed inside. She walked hurridly towards Dornfield, Morgan and the policeman.

"Ben...Benjamin, may I speak with you?" she called. Dornfield turned instantly recognizing the voice. His face froze in amazement when he confirmed with his eyes the identity of the voice.

"Why yes...ahh, excuse me, please, gentlemen," and he walked over to the woman who had moved slightly to be out of earshot of Morgan and the policeman.

"How bad is it?" she began. "I heard on the radio..."

Benjamin moved his feet nervously. They had a pact; 'never...not ever

...be seen talking in public!'

"Total, I'm afraid. There is nothing to salvage."

She glanced over his shoulder and could see for herself nothing paper, wooden or light metal survived. Her hand moved to wipe a tear away from a shiney cheek.

"Oh my God...I am so sorry. This is just terrible." Then she smiled a reassuring smile. "But, there is insurance; I'll call Nathan Bolston right away. I'm sure your mind is not ready for this...but how long will it take to get replacement equipment?"

She was right; he had not even begun to consider this step. He hadn't even realized that she would have insurance on at least the major pieces of equipment. 'Of course she would...she is Miss Polly...' he thought.

"Several weeks I imagine. The big loss is the files, the thousands of photographs, all of the type set records."

"But this is Wednesday morning...the next issue of the paper? Wasn't it...?"

He smiled and she could tell at least this news was going to be good.

"Good luck. I finished it about midnight and had the negatives with me at home; all 48 pages. I guess I'll take them out myself now, and up there I can get a last minute story inserted about the fire here."

Polly was visibly relieved; she knew the financial importance of this first-of-year issue. Without thinking she stepped forward and hugged him; Benjamin was flustered because he knew many people were watching.

"OK" she said dabbing more tears from her face, "You write that you will be back in business in not less than two weeks and we'll spend what we have to making that happen. Agreed?"

This lady never failed to amaze him. If he didn't know better from personal experience, he would believe native tales that she had huge testicals hanging between her legs.

His back to the onlookers he winked at Polly and smiled.

"You find out about insurance and I'll get us into print on time. Oh, if you can pull a few strings...I may have some difficulty getting on Pan Am at this late hour."

"Done. Your tickets will be in the agency office by 10." She ~~winked at him through~~ adjusted her designer sunglasses and turned to walk back to her van.

Dornfield watched her climb into the van and now noticed the face of a young white man in the passenger compartment. He was expecting strong questions from Morgan when he turned around and wasn't ready with an answer yet. Polly started the van, rolled down the window and waved. He waved back as she pulled out of the parking lot.

Morgan was at his shoulder before he could turn.

"What in the hell...was that all about? You two acted like old friends!"

Dornfield knew this had better be good; perhaps just a white lie?

"Mrs. Conner is very upset about the fire. She really was concerned about my losing the newspaper."

Morgan's eyes said he wasn't buying any of this.

"Honestly. She even offered me help if I needed it. I told her she could help by getting me a ticket on Pan Am today." He almost started to explain that he still had the negatives for this week's paper, but something told him not to do this.

Morgan now partially believed. "Well, will wonders never cease. If that had been her dead husband, I'd believe the offer of help. But for her to

want to help ... well, maybe there's some hope for the white folks afterall!"

Dornfield wanted out of the conversation as fast as possible.

"Let me get some more pictures; then, can I go to your office to use a typewriter? I want to get some copy written on this."

...

Alton Burgess had just finished videotaping the burned out building for his father when he saw Pauline Conner's van enter the driveway. He turned his camcorder in her direction and the tape continued to roll as she got out of the vehicle and walked towards the three men. He continued to keep her in focus when Benjamin joined her and then both were full framed in his viewfinder for as long as they talked. He could see Mrs. Conner's lips moving in his lens but couldn't hear the conversation. When they finished talking Alton pushed the pause button and made one more round of the building. At the rear, only one policeman was present at the far end. Alton began poking in the debris which had settled into the newspaper office; debris which included both the burned remains of the upstairs apartment and the rear room of the paper office.

Something caught his eye; he pushed the pause button to restart the machine and refocused the lens on a pile of rags at his feet. That they had not burned was the first thing that interested him. Intense heat had been present; the rags, of the type used in a machine shop to clean up grease and oil, were fused together.

'No telling how many were here originally,' he thought. With the camcorder still running he bent over to touch the charred, fused pile.

"This is a pile of rags I find along the back ...ahh, eastern wall of the

newspaper office," he began, for the benefit of the camcorder microphone. "It didn't burn completely," and he touched it with his hands. Now he could see why; the rags were so soaked with machine or engine oil they had actually resisted burning. But the surface ... "the surface of these rags is flash burned, as if there was intense but brief heat. The inside fibers are so soaked with heavy oil, they never reached combustion temperature."

He stood up again, tape still running. Refocusing on the rags at his feet he traced a path with the camera lens to directly above; straight into the teetering remains of a stainless steel sink still clamped to the wall by the plumbing, although the cabinet where it was mounted was mostly burned away.

Alton's attendence at Florida State University had included a voluntary two years with the Naval ROTC. His father had suggested this experience would serve him well in later years. Now here was the first dividend of that period of his life.

"As a fire control trainee in Naval ROTC," he began aloud for the microphone, "I learned how it is possible to set a fire using oil soaked rags. I also learned how the rags often don't themselves burn, especially if they are splashed with gasoline at the same time. It seems to me this fire may have begun up here," still holding the camera beneath the sink, "and after it spread through the apartment, and the floor below burned away, these rags fell down here to the newspaper office," ~~panning~~ tilting his lens down the wall to the pile of rags.

He then panned the camera across the newspaper office from his rear vantage point, and pushed the pause button once again. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Lieutenent LaSarde and Dornfield walking his way. As soon as they disappeared behind the block wall of the building, Alton took

his foot and pushed cinders over the pile of rags. 'Now they won't be easily seen' he thought to himself. And he began walking back to his car.

...

The sports fishing boat Island Pride had six tourists on board this morning. Captain Alan Pennault was taking a day off from his normal scuba diving business because he needed a break. After 15 years on Portobello, he knew all of the fishing holes from both above and below the water line. He was not pleased when, after rounding northwest point, he detected a boat at anchor in the best grouper and snapper 'hole' on the west side. His anger turned to amusement when he had traveled a few more miles; the anchored boat was as well known to him as his own two. Lionel was his friend and if Lionel was here fishing, well, 'this won't be a wasted day!'.

"White man coming," called a Haitian to Ashworth. The former politician was trying to catch a few hours of sleep to make up for his long night. Lionel climbed the steps from the cuddy cabin just in time to see Pennault's boat slow to a dead stop less than fifty feet to his starboard.

"Ahoy Lionel...how is the fishing?" called Alan.

Ashworth smiled to himself; 'the perfect alibi'. He walked to the fish box at the stern and threw open the case.

"Fishing good!" he called back. "Plenty grouper, snapper..." and he held up six fish in quick succession. Alan was beaming.

"How long ago?"

Lionel smiled broadly. "That's the bad news. Most of these between midnight and 4...but there's plenty more where these come from!"

"Do you mind if we anchor up here windward of you?"

"Course not; you have lunch?"

Alan laughed and thrust his arm in the air. "Lunch and plenty of beer; hollar when you need something," and he waved a salute, pulling his boat in a tight leeward thrust to get upwind with the bow heading northwest.

...

Jeremy McTabbish was beginning to feel like a modern day commuter. For the third morning in four days he was stepping out of an airplane on Portobello's ramp.

The AG walked briskly into the terminal building and without diverting his eyes went straight to the front entrance. There he spied a waiting police vehicle.

"Good mornin', sir," called the Lieutenent.

"Good day Lieutenent! this is getting to be a habit!"

"Yes sir. To the fire?"

"Yes, please. Tell me what you can."

The Rover swung out of the restricted parking lane and was making the loop past the remainder of the terminal building before heading back into town.

"Yes, sir. Plenty mess. Firemen arrive late, building badly burned. Search for people now done; we not find any."

Jeremy sighed an audible relief. "Good. Any leads on how it started?"

Lieutenent LaSarde was beginning to tire of that question. If people would stop asking him that, he might actually have some time to do some investigation.

"No, sir. Big soup. Firemen use plenty water. They empty cistern at Square and water from tanker." LaSarde had never seen anything quite like the debris. Because the building had extensive block walls and a concrete floor,

the burned remains were trapped in wet, goo-filled pools all over the foundation. A man had to put on boots just to wade through the piles; and the police department only had a single pair of boots. It was slow going.

The two men drove silently until they arrived at Central Square. The crowd had now thinned; only a single policeman was stationed at the site and he would leave after Jeremy's inspection.

...

"Father, I think you should look at this now," urged Alton walking into Avery's office. The elder Burgess had just completed a series of telephone calls searching for Lionel Ashworth.

"Shut the door," he directed, taking his telephones from the cradles to busy the lines.

Alton was loading the cassette into the VCR. "The building is a total loss; Whitebourn will be a year rebuilding. But the really interesting part is here..." and he started the machine to pick up the tape where he had left it cued.

"This is a pile of rags I find along the back, ahh ... eastern wall..." began the audio. Avery watched in fascination until it ended.

"Again? May I see it again?" he directed. Alton was pleased his father was impressed. The tape re-wound he restarted the play button. But the tape had re-wound slightly prior to the cued piece and the screen now showed Benjamin and Polly in conversation. Alton reached to fast forward the tape.

"Wait! What's this?"

"Oh. Just before I left Pauline Conner drove up and Benjamin went to speak to her. I guess I was just playing..."

"Can I see where this started?"

"Yes, of course...hold on," and his hands directed the tape into an on-screen reverse mode.

"There," urged Avery. "Start now."

The tape showed the vehicle pulling into the lot. Both men watched in silence. At the point Pauline leaned forward and hugged Dornfield, Avery's eyes flashed. He waited another few seconds, and then "Back it up...more...more. OK, now let it go."

He watched the hugging scene a second time.

'That's a lady who has hugged this man before,' he thought to himself. 'He may have been uncomfortable, but she was not. So ... the Governor was right. Dornfield does have a wealthy local backer.' Avery sat silently and watched through Alton's monologue a second time. At the end he had a question.

"Those rags ... might somebody else find them?"

Alton smiled. "No, I think not. I buried them in the debris. Unless they go through everything there and look carefully, I don't think they will be found."

Avery was pleased with the answer.

"Good. Very good. But it might be best if you went back, when the place is deserted later today, and retrieve them. Just be sure that when you do, you videotape everything. Tell us you are going back for them, place the rags in a plastic bag. I want this documented."

Alton understood his instructions clearly, but ...

"Yes, but I am confused. Shouldn't we bring this to the attention of ..." and he couldn't think whom they should tell.

Avery laughed.

"The police?" he asked. "Certainly not. Their skills are far below this sort of evidence. The fire department?" He laughed again. "There isn't anybody there who can even spell fire-man."

He paused, thinking. "Maybe the Governor?" That would depend upon how the events of the day, and week went.

-30-

Chapter 28/begun August 18, 1991

"Mr. Stanfield, you and I have been through lean years together and we share most of our thoughts. Now I think it time for you to tell me about this Lane woman."

Minister Stanfield and the CM were locked inside the CM's office awaiting the arrival of Minister Hardgraves. With his arrival they would drive to the few miles to the Governor's office.

Stanfield was suffering from sleep lost and an ulcer was flaring. His own, private, plans to embarrass the CM and force him to resign thereby allowing his own ascendency to the Chief Minister post had taken a downturn. He had already decided partial truth rather than outright lies would work best in this situation. But there was so much he did not understand, ~~about the situation~~ he feared of each new moment, each new revelation.

"Alright, I knew Lane was working for Harvey. But I had no idea of the extent of their business activity. I simply thought she gathered information for him."

Smythe was ~~stalking~~ PACING? in his own office, listening intently.

"Please proceed."

"Some people felt they owed Mrs. Lane for, well, favours. So we-"

"Favours? You mean information she gave you? Or sex? Or both-"

"She always wanted to be on top...I mean...she always tried to place you in a position of owing her something. She is a most difficult woman to say 'no' to."

Smythe was now wondering whether any minister or top government official, other than himself, had escaped 'owing' Mrs. Lane. Was he all alone in this matter; was every other government official going to be dragged into this

mess? How much chance did he have of keeping his party in power if there was going to be a sex-scandal touching virtually everyone in government?

"Christine Keeler" he said aloud. Stanfield caught the name but it did not register for a few seconds.

"I think not-"

"You didn't think at all! You, the brightest member of government allowed yourself to be bought by this white woman's favours! If Dornfield pieces his together-"

Stanfield allowed his caution to slip. "You mean the Benjamin Dornfield who had his business burn to the ground this morning!"

Smythe stopped pacing, ~~and~~ twisting his body to face the minister squarely.

"Aaah yes ... now we are to the REAL problem. You and I sat at Waterloo yesterday afternoon and practically said we were going to burn Dornfield out. And wonder of all wonders, what do I hear on the radio this morning but a full report of Dornfield's business having been turned to cinder. You and I both know in a half hour we are going to be asked to explain this coincidence to the British!"

"Coincidence?"

Smythe now turned away from his minister, glancing ~~and glanced~~ through the dust coated window TO the street below. A handful of locals lounged under a sickly palm tree.

"You know, I hope, ~~that~~ I had nothing to do with the fire."

Stanfield was feeling a bit better. Now he had the CM squirming and for the moment the Lane woman was forgotten.

"Yes, I believe that. But unless somebody comes forward and admits they set the fire, or evidence proves beyond a doubt the fire began on its own,

the Governor will go to his grave believing you ordered the fire. You suggested the Portobello fire department needed more practice, and, Lionel was on the island-".

"How you know that?"

"The same way you know it; we both made telephone calls this morning."

"And Lionel was fishing on his boat-"

"So it seems, but who's going to testify to that? Two Haitian helpers?"

Smythe's eyes returned to the dirty window.

"Hardgraves is coming", spotting the Minister crossing the street. "I think it best to decide how we will deal with the British question when it comes, before we ~~go~~ have."

...

The ~~police~~ Governor's guard announced the arrival of the politicians. "Your Excellency; Chief Minister Smythe, the Honourable Minister Stanfield and the Honourable Minister Hardgraves are here to see you!"

Burnside, AG McTabbish and Chief Secretary Thatcher were waiting in the Governor's modest office. Burnside's meeting plan had been hammered out over strenuous objections from the AG who seemed peculiarily intent of steering the conversation away from the latest fire. The AG had argued that neither side would benefit from a possible revelation of politician involvement in the fire. The Governor was just as intent to insure the fires stopped before somebody was injured or killed. Privately, he did agree that nothing positive would come from pointing fingers & leveling charges against the CM and his henchmen; but he wanted the threat of such charges to remain uppermost in Smythe's mind. There was a very fine line here to be walked.

"Mister Smythe, Mister Stanfield, Mister Hardgraves...", the Governor

greeted each one in turn but purposefully clasped them by the elbow rather than shaking their hands. The 'Mister' was noticed by Smythe and Stanfield; a 'demotion' to civilian ranks.

Seated, each looked about for a leader to speak. The Governor allowed the silence to last a full 30 seconds and then ~~began~~ opened the meeting.

"Unlike yesterday's meeting where I felt we had achieved a new level of mutual understanding, and cooperation, there is a stigma today ~~which casts~~ casting a cloud over this proceeding. Mister Chief Minister, perhaps you would like to speak first?"

Smythe had ~~expected~~ anticipated a lecture followed by an inquisition. He was not prepared to lead off the meeting and instantly realized the Governor was ~~going~~ preparing to allow him to dig his own hole. 'I hope it is not a burial site' he ~~mused~~ thought.

He cleared his throat, pleading for more time. Seated next to him, Stanfield eye's were glued to his shoe, tapping on the worn carpet.

"The Dornfield fire?" he said, looking directly at Burnside.

"A good place to start," nodded the Governor.

"Yes, well .... I can appreciate that after what I said in yesterday's meeting, the fire that followed must seem to be fulfillment of a prophecy." He couldn't think what to say next. The AG tried to help.

"Was it a coincidence, then?"

"Yes, totally. I swear to you I had nothing to do with the fire, I did not arrange for the fire, and I was as shocked this morning to learn about it as you were undoubtedly certain I was implicated. It is a total coincidence."

His words hung in the air and the Governor once again allowed the silence to linger.

"Minister Stanfield, what about you?" Burnside finally said. He wanted each man to have his say before he began dressing them down.

Stanfield had promised his ulcer and himself he would remain as quiet and unobtrusive in the meeting as possible. He now realized this would be VERY difficult ~~at best~~. 'I wonder what they would say if I asked to defer any statement until such time as my attorney ~~could~~ MIGHT be present?' he pondered. He was considering this option when the Governor spoke again.

"Minister Stanfield?"

"I don't like being here. And I think you are enjoying this immensely. You've got three black guys on the carpet for a fire about which I believe we know almost nothing. Do you EVEN have ~~any~~ evidence this fire was deliberate, or is this SIMPLY a white man's fishing expedition?"

Now it was the Governor's turn to fidget. He noticed the AG was equally uncomfortable. Stanfield seldom drew attention to the black and white conflicts of the country, but when he did, his oratory was guaranteed to incite ~~the~~ natives ~~i~~to hostile acts. This was to be avoided; perhaps at all costs.

"The fire was neither black nor white; it was destruction of a building owned by a white investor AND ~~but~~ occupied by numerous black businessmen. I resent your implication-"

"And I resent your attempting to make this black government responsible for this fire. The Chief Minister has already told you it is an unfortunate coincidence that he spoke of fire yesterday and THEN we had a fire last night. Now, unless you have some firm evidence to the contrary, I say this is a dead issue!"

Silence once again descended over the room. It lasted for more than a

minute but each would later ~~believe~~ recall it lasted several minutes.

...

Avery Burgess seldom explained to Velma where he intended to go when he went out at night. But tonight was different, and she noticed he not only told her about a meeting at Charles Scott's office, but lingered about the house after telling her. She had spoken to Alton about his father's actions.

'That fire today at Central Square is most puzzling,' her son had related. 'It was probably started on purpose and Dad is worried who did it, and why'.

Velma's own parents were about as removed from the street politics of the country as any ~~people~~ Nonce in the islands. She grew up insulated from the streets although realizing many street operatives considered fire a weapon-of-choice for settling disagreements or perceived grievances. The concept of burning something or somebody down in retaliation was repugnent to her. She was also aware Avery had personally spent hours that afternoon checking the status of their own home security system, the complex fire-sprinkler network, and the dozens of fire extinguishers scattered throughout the complex. If Avery was concerned, then she would be too.

...

Governor Burnside and McTabbish sat alone in the nearly darkened office. Smythe, Stanfield and Hardgraves had been gone for several hours. Martin had rung Mindy to say he would be close to 9 PM before arriving home.

The tapes of the last two meetings with the politicians had been run and re-run a second time. Both men were assessing the 'tone' of the voices; looking for telltale signs of anxiety and frustration from the ministers. They heard plenty of both.

Burnside broke the silence. "I believe Smythe; he didn't have any prior

knowledge of the Central Square fire. But Stanfield...he alludes me."

The AG was now more certain than ever the Governor was fallible. But who was to say he, the AG, was any more capable? The Governor was asking for his opinion, as he often did. Suppose he gave something other than his real opinion?

"Smythe is very clever. I think he is capable of fooling us. And I wonder if they had this ~~all~~ worked out in advance, deliberately done to get the CM off our hook?" He did not really believe this but wanted to see where ~~Martin~~ The Governor ~~would~~ Didn't now head.

"Really! Well, if Smythe and Stanfield could have guessed I would ask them to speak first, that would surprise me. You do feel this way?"

He did not. "I believe we must consider it a possibility because if we decide Smythe is blameless, it will be like dismissing him from the list of suspects. Think of this as a standard police action; we arrest everyone we can think of for questioning, and then slowly release them one by one. I'm reluctant to eliminate Smythe from the line-up so early."

Burnside pondered the ramifications of this line of reasoning. 'If I am convinced Smythe is not involved, why not release him?'

"So we hold onto him longer; then what?"

The AG was not certain where this was headed himself.

"If he stays on the list, and he is as you suggest innocent, he may create some pressure on others such as Stanfield. We ~~might~~ can see the real rat run for cover because of ~~that~~ pressure."

The Governor enjoyed McTabbish's views although he would admit he didn't always take them seriously enough. This time, however, he would give extra weight to the AG.

"Interesting. I wish we knew what they were saying amongst themselves."

Jeremy saw an opening.

"The synthesizer?"

The Cable and Wireless instrument remained stored in the Governor's office at Waterloo. There had been a request from Robin Lewster ~~that~~ it be returned; his request remained unanswered. ~~but no answer had been given.~~

"We'd be breaking the law?"

"How far can you stretch national security in your mind? Is a rampage of unexplained fires a threat to ~~our~~ security?"

Burnside was still smarting from the rebuke he received from London; they had granted him very little latitude ~~with~~ about closing down the newspaper and he had no desire to go back ~~to them~~ a second time for permission to act. If he kept asking for ~~permission~~ approval they ~~might~~ could decide he was no longer capable of handling the islands. So he chose his words carefully. AGs had been known to testify against a Governor ~~to~~ during an official inquiry.

"Let us suppose the next fire occured at say Waterloo, or at Barclays Bank. Or Avery Burgess's home. Are we more, or less responsible, if there had been steps we could have taken to prevent such a fire, but failed to take those steps?"

McTabbish could feel his adrenaline pumping; most unusual for this quiet Scottish man. 'This is exciting; I could never return to private practice!'

"Oh my, I see your point. You wish my view on the legality of using the synthesizer again?"

"Yes I do."

McTabbish hoped he would not regret the next sentence.

"I would argue you have every legal right as Governor to selectively use

this machine to monitor conversations of people we might ~~have arrested~~ be holding for questioning if this case was heading in that direction."

Burnside smiled.

"Will you put that into a written statement for my files, just in case?"

"As a matter of my opinion, of course."

...

As landlord-owner for the building where Scott maintains his offices, Avery's master key allowed him quiet access, slipping in ~~to see Scott~~ without attracting the attention of the property's night watchman. Scott's second floor offices, occupying virtually ~~all of the~~ the entire floor, were dark save a tiny sliver of light creeping from beneath a single door. From the street, ~~no light appeared at all.~~ The Building looked dark & empty.

Avery knocked lightly and was rewarded with the sounds of shuffling feet and a creaking swivel chair. Seconds later the door knob turned from the inside and light bathed Avery.

Neither man said a word as Avery ~~walked~~ shuffled into Scott's private office shutting the door behind him. The attorney beckoned to a chair in front of a dark table. A cold diet Coke was awaiting the visitor. Both men sat down side by side and Avery, out of habit, reached for the can, taking a sip.

Scott reached out to a keyboard ~~and struck~~ striking a key; a display screen jumped to life and a jumble of text appeared. Scott ~~began~~ opened the discussion.

"You remember how when I first moved here you and Bill Conner were my first real clients?"

Avery nodded.

"And although the two of you were close friends, what I did for Bill or what I did for you remained separate. Fortunately the two of you seldom had

business dealings together so keeping the two of you apart was ~~never a real~~ not a problem."

Avery nodded again, recalling one occasion when Bill and Polly had shown some interest in a real estate development he was planning. Nothing came of that ~~interest~~ discussion so the question of conflict never ~~came up~~ arose. Since that time most of Avery's legal business had been moved to a larger law-office across the street, in another of his buildings.

"Well, as Bill's attorney, I was privy to many things he shared with no-one else; including Pauline."

Avery laughed; he knew how that worked.

"I don't tell Velma everything either!"

Scott understood and smiled.

"But," he continued, "In Bill's case there was more to be kept from Pauline than business deals or Bill's children's affairs. And this is where my relationship with Bill becomes very sticky."

Avery's curiosity was piqued. 'Am I about to learn something of a private nature?' he wondered. He decided he would pry a little, perhaps making it easier for Scott.

"You mean Bill's interest in 'our project'?"

"Yes and no. You are fully aware ~~that~~ Bill never shared the project, as you call it, with Polly. But, there is some history leading up to the project which is far more private than even the project itself."

Attorney Charles Scott was now at ~~the~~ his crossroads; there would be no turning back. Avery sensed ~~it~~ this and said nothing ~~while~~ as Scott stared at the computer display screen. Avery now looked at the screen as well and began reading the text displayed there for the first time. Until now it had been

merely lines of words.

Scott pointed to a specific line with his index finger. Avery's eyes went to the indicated line; and read ~~to read~~

"Winston Campbell on line".

"Avery, I want to introduce you to someone. His name is Winston Campbell and he's located on Niuafo'ou, an island in the Pacific near the equator. He has several things to ask you."

No~~body~~ person loved intrigue more than Avery. He re-read 'Winston Campbell on line' and sucked in a large breath. When Bill Conner had been alive, ~~he~~ Avery spent ~~hour~~ (long hours) a~~fter hour~~ 'playing' with long distance communications using Bill's Ham radio set. He never got into the electronics, but the art of communicating around the world had been ~~very~~ most exciting. Without thinking he blurted out "This is ~~just~~ sometimes like Bill's Ham radio set!".

Scott smiled and reached for the keyboard. He typed in a short message:

"Winston, Avery Burgess is here and ready to talk with you".

The screen now split in ~~two~~ half, and at the top appeared Scott's text. Below a dashed line in the middle, new text was now appearing.

"Good evening Avery. Do you remember the trip you took to Birmingham, England in September 1984 and how you worked in the rain for several hours assisting with the assembly of a six meter satellite dish?"

The cursor stopped moving and Scott turned to Avery for his reaction. He saw complete puzzlement on the large man's face. Scott waited and the puzzlement turned to a ~~broad~~ faint smile. Neither man spoke, ~~and~~ without warning The cursor began moving again.

"Perhaps then you remember the day you climbed onto the roof of your original store, in the building just to the west of where you now

sit, to install the first television antenna on the island. That would have been, let me see, September 1st in 1979?"

Avery's face was ~~now~~ damp ~~from~~ with perspiration, his hands clasped together ~~clinched~~ straining and, sweat-soaked. His eyes ~~were~~ had rolled back and ~~his~~ the head gyrated ~~from~~ between the screen display ~~to~~ and the ceiling.

Scott ~~had~~ was worried ~~that~~ Avery might have a violent emotional response, even an attack of some sort. The next few seconds would be telling.

The cursor began to move ~~again.~~ a third time.

"Tell me, is the telephone recording system still operating properly? Have you ever seen any red lights on the display?"

Avery's sorrel hands unfolded, ~~and~~ he ~~grabbed~~ gripped the edge~~s~~ of the table as if seeking support. Scott looked quickly behind the big man to check the floor, in case Avery should faint. Now, too late, he remembered Avery's mysterious collapse ~~just~~ only two nights before.

~~The~~ Avery began to laugh; softly at first and then uncontrollably. Shortly large tears were rolling down his cheek as he pushed himself away from the table with two strong hands and dropped his head into his hands.

Scott quickly typed a single word into the keyboard.

"standby"

Then he rose and reached over to place his ~~own~~ hands in a comforting position on the broad Burgess shoulders. Avery suddenly stopped his laughter and turned his head to look Scott straight in the eye, ~~Avery was~~ smiling broadly.

"Pauline never saw Bill's body, did she?"

"No, she saw a urn filled with ashes-"

Now the laughter began anew and Scott could not help himself; he too was

laughing uncontrollably and tears ran down ~~his face.~~ Good Man Gras. cheeks?

...

Lionel Ashwood's Freedom IV, pulled into safe harborage near Five Cays as the ~~early~~ January sun ~~was sliding~~ slow into the Atlantic to ~~his~~ the southwest. After sharing a lunch of freshly grilled fish with Captain Alan Pennault and his load of tourist fisherpersons, Lionel ~~had~~ slept. But during lunch he regaled the white tourists with his legendary native stories; ~~and~~ all would now return to the United States to propagate the tale of the man who would be 'king of the world' through genetic invasion. Pennault in turn would repeat his admiration for Lionel's fishing skills by telling everyone he saw at the Erebus Bar this evening how Freedom IV had captured the first angling prizes of the year, ~~by~~ beating the white folks to the fishing hole at the stroke of midnight. Lionel was now ~~comfortable~~ certain his fishing alibi was unassailable.

Rounding the last turn of the coral driveway, a single remaining headlight of his battered pickup truck swept across the half-open garage door. The garage door had been stuck half up, or half down, for more than a year now. ~~Just~~ As he reached for the ignition key to shut down the truck, a shadow, bent over and walking, appeared through the doorway. Lionel's left hand fingered the broken knob on the headlight switch; his right hand instinctively reached ~~under~~ behind the seat for ~~the~~ a familiar feel of a ~~police~~ baseball bat truncheon.

Fearing being caught inside the truck, he jabbed the headlight switch off and kicked open the driver's side door jumping out and away from the truck. For a man of more than 300 pounds, he moved with ~~great~~ surprising agility. The club remained hidden behind his back but the muscles in his sizeable right arm were taunt and ~~ready~~ prepared to uncoil.

The darkened figure stopped just feet from him and spoke.

"Hey, calm down; it's ~~just~~ me!"

"What you do here?" demanded the next king of the world. "You get cracked head sneaking 'round like that! Why you not Grand Turk?"

"I took a chance, a big chance, to pop over here tonight. We need to talk, now. Are we alone?"

Lionel could not be sure about that. He expected no-one, but then people dropped by at all hours. Some without a place to sleep or food to eat simply walked in and made themselves at home.

"I 'spect no-one. You look 'round; you see ~~persons~~ anybody?"

"No-one. The electrics were off, the TV is off. Perhaps you should check, before we go inside?"

Lionel's arm was now relaxed but the club still ~~by~~ hung out of sight behind his back. He was born a cautious man.

"Get here, behind truck. I check first, ~~then~~ call you."

Lionel walked towards the house as his visitor passed his side, crouching beside the truck door. After 30 seconds lights came on inside the house. Sixty more seconds the lights went off again and Lionel's hulking form appeared as a silhouette against the white-painted entrance way.

"House 'mpty; get 'ur ass in here!"

...

Mindy Burnside had dismissed the house keeper, sent son John off to his private study, and dressed in Martin's favorite negligee in anticipation of his late arrival home. This she covered with a combed cotton robe, posting herself in the front room of Waterloo awaiting the return of her husband. In the kitchen, a small dinner roast, boiled potatos and carrots were warming.

Two trays awaited her final preparations; she planned a quiet, private meal in their upstairs bedroom suite. 'This, afterall, is the first day of his last year in government service' she thought to herself. 'I want him to know he has my support as we head down the last furlong!'

Headlights swept the long front driveway; the unmistakeable lights of a 20 year old Morris sedan. Presently it ~~pulled~~ braked to a stop before their front doors; ~~and~~ she heard Martin dismiss the driver, and the policeman that went with him ~~everywhere~~. The car was heading for the garage when she opened the door to greet the Governor.

Martin's eyes lit up brightly when he saw Mindy framed against the cool, distant light of a hallway bulb far behind her. The informality of the robe was his first clue; the bright red collar of a satin negligee peeking through the V neck of the robe left no doubts in his mind.

"John is in bed?" he teased. Mindy smiled and took his hand.

"Yes and the staff is dismissed", rubbing his ear with her fingertips and kissing him on the cheek. "I've drawn you a tub upstairs and if you will go there without stopping, there will be a nice reward for you after a good baking."

They walked hand in hand to the staircase where Martin stopped long enough to place his briefcase on a chair and then wrap his arms about her waist. The gentle touch and the flat of his palm resting against her buttox melted all of her fears and anxieties away.

"A rough day?" she asked.

"The roughest January 2nd of my life," he answered.

"We do have a saying, you know..."

"We, being the English?"

"All's well that ends well. Now, off to your tub!"

...

"I don't mind telling you, now, Avery ~~that~~ I was frightened to death when you grabbed the edge of the desk with your fingers and clamped down tight. I had honestly forgotten, for the moment, your 'spell' of a couple of nights ago. I thought we were going to lose you right there!"

Avery had been bubbling with excitement and ~~a~~ new found enthusiasm for nearly an hour. Several times he had told Charles "This is the second miracle in less than a week!" The attorney ~~had~~ not asked what the first ~~one~~ might have been.

Avery's eyes shone with a brilliance Scott could not recall last seeing; he knew it had been many years.

"Charles, I am a new man. Someday you must tell me why Bill Conner fooled us all this way; I'm certain the reasons are ~~magnificent~~. But for now, I simply wish to enjoy the excitement of knowing our 'project' is alive and well. I must go ... but please, before I do. Tell me, one more time how this satellite connection works."

This would be the third time Charles had explained it. He knew the first time was a loss; Avery kept laughing without warning as he talked, apparently reliving the instant when he realized Bill was very much alive.

"OK, one last time for tonight.

"This computer terminal is dedicated as a special FAX machine. I can ~~type~~ and receive messages with Bill. And this handset," reaching for a bright blue telephone instrument hidden behind the computer display terminal, "is a voice connection on the same circuit.

"Here," fingering a telephone wire " is a dedicated telephone line Bill

~~had~~ installed on lease from Cable and Wireless before he...left. It connects this computer and this handset to a special satellite transceiver located at the cable TV equipment building.

"Do you remember when Bill brought ~~that~~ team of engineers down from Canada and they installed the really big satellite dish at the cable facility?"

Avery remembered for several reasons; the same engineers ~~had~~ also helped Bill with ~~his own~~ planning for Avery's in-home security system and the telephone recording system.

"Yes, that ~~is~~ the dish that brings us seven channels of TV from Canada, through the Canadian satellite. Bill always said this island was the furthest point from Canada that had Canadian TV and it took that huge dish to make it possible."

"Precisely. What he never told anyone, myself included at the time, was that the same dish also included equipment to connect this island through a satellite over the Pacific Ocean to a terminal he planned to install in the Kingdom of Tonga. Bill knew all along he would be leaving here, leaving Pauline, and this was his way of leaving but not losing contact with ~~this~~ island."

Avery was slowly understanding the system.

"So each time you wish to talk ~~with~~ Bill, you call ~~him~~ on this keyboard, and the message travels from here through the line rented from Cable and Wireless to the cable TV station. Then ~~he goes~~ into a transmitter which is connected to the huge dish. Now what's this about a satellite out over the Pacific?"

Charles knew there was no turning back now. He had to trust Avery.

"Remember years ago when some guy in Florida overrode the HBO channel on satellite and transmitted a message warning HBO to lower its subscription rates...or else?"

Avery ~~smiled and laughed~~ Remembered. "Do you know I actually met the guy who did that? Bill had him down here right after it happened. John...let me think now-"

"McDougal. John McDougal ~~is~~ was his name," filled in Charles. "Well, they called him Captain Midnight, and when John broke into the HBO satellite circuit, ~~it created an~~ there was an international stink. Suddenly the entire world of satellite people ~~got concerned about~~ was aware of unauthorized use of satellites. I can confide in you ~~that~~ Bill arranged the entire Captain Midnight episode, as a test of ~~the~~ satellite system defenses; kind of like testing the anti-ballastic missile system in the United States just to be sure it would work if the case Russians ever really attacked."

Avery was really enjoying this.

"While HBO and the satellite cops were trying to figure out how this could happen, and how to prevent it from happening again, Bill was monitoring their counter-measures, and testing his own system. You see, he couldn't be sure how effective they might be as 'satellite cops' until they were faced with a real threat. Captain Midnight was a test to lure them into testing their defenses. What he ~~found out was~~ learned was it is possible to send a voice or FAX channel of information through almost any satellite in orbit, and the people who operate these things ~~would~~ will never ~~even~~ know the signal ~~was~~ is there if it was done properly."

Avery was on the edge of his chair. "Say that again, a different way!"

"OK. You have this big airliner that flies between New York and London. The airline has several ~~ways~~ ways to ~~insure~~ be sure nobody gets on board without a paid

ticket. Then along comes some~~body~~one who figures out how to stow-away at will, and never get caught. So this clever person rides for free, back and forth between London and New York, and nobody ever knows he's on board."

"So when you transmit to Bill, the signal from the huge dish up on Leeward Highway rides through the satellite like a stowaway; nobody knows it's there?"

Charles leaned back in ~~his~~ the chair, ~~and~~ spread his feet ~~out~~ in front of him self.

"Precisely. I talk with Bill as long and as often as I wish, ~~every week.~~ He tells me we are more than 4,000 miles apart as the crow might fly. Our transmissions stowaway on a Pacific-ocean satellite and nobody suspects it is happening."

Avery was ~~laughing~~ chuckling again. "I like it best of all because it's ~~is~~ a free ride; ~~and~~ neither Cable and Wireless nor the Government ~~don't~~ know it's ~~is~~ happening because it bypasses the telephone system!"

Charles scowled. "That's almost true; we do use about two miles of Cable and Wireless ~~wire~~ cable to ~~go from here up~~ connect this office to the cable TV tower, and frankly Bill ~~would like~~ wants to do away with that as well, before the project starts".

"~~And so~~ You mean this system is also going to be the radio link to allow 'Radio Free Portobello' to have live reports from, say, the United Nations?"

"Exactly. The original plan was for Joshua to produce a program, nightly at his home near the UN. Then using a satellite link Bill and this John McDougal built years ago, Joshua would come on the air at the appointed time and his program about independence for Portobello would be sent through a satellite down to a FM transmitter here. I know it sounds complicated-"

"No, not complicated, even if ~~I know~~ it is far above my head, or yours. But don't we have proof of its simplicity, right here?"

Charles didn't follow Avery's reasoning.

"How's that?"

Avery smiled and pointed to Bill's last text, still frozen on the screen. "Right there. He's been gone more than 30 months and it is still working. He always told me the most complicated system could, with time, be reduced to the basic elements. That's our proof!"

...

"I needed that," smiled Martin Burnside.

"The pot roast...or?"

Martin's stomach in soft laughter, Mindy stroked his cheek gently.

"Now," she began, "I know you won't go to sleep until summarized the problems of the day. I'm listening."

It was a tradition as old as the marriage. When Martin attorney for government, the Attorney General in the British Virgin, he developed the sleep-robbing habit of laying in bed tossing and tumbling, reciting in his mind whatever case he was assigned at the moment. One day he offered to tell Mindy, and having done so, fell straight asleep. Ever since that time Mindy had become his 'moot court'; she listened while he cited all of the facts pro and con, seldom saying a word. Once he had it off his mind, he would sleep.

"OK; here goes. A person or persons burns down an office building on Portobello. This happens only hours after our Chief Minister threatens to do just this in a meeting in my office. Naturally I am suspicious he is somehow implicated in the fire.

"Then I learn that our national firebug, one Lionel Ashwood, was not only

on Portobello just before the fire began, but that he has an almost impossibly good alibi for the exact time the fire begins. That only increases my apprehension the fire was deliberately set; probably by this Ashwood fellow.

"And Ashwood is the political party hack for that island, the CM's duty man. It all fits together very nicely. I dare say too nicely.

"In my late afternoon meeting with Smythe today I listen carefully to what he had to say and everything I hear from his mouth tells me he is nervous and apprehensive; but not guilty. It is as if he, too, knows the evidence implicates him and is trying desperately to convince me of his innocence. The emotion I read from ~~here~~ him is panic, not out of guilt, but born out of a feeling of frustration.

"In the same meeting of his nemesis Minister Stanfield, whom we all know to be the pretender to the CM's throne, cleverly switches our questions from a discussion of the fire to an attack on the white man. And looking back, I wonder just how devilishly clever this might have been. ~~It almost seems~~ Isn't Possible Stanfield has found the perfect defense for the CM; the one defense that scares us off the inquisition but in the process leaves the CM more guilty in our eyes than ever before?"

Mindy cleared her throat; a sign she intended to interrupt. She waited a few seconds and spoke.

"And your AG; how did he interpret all of this?"

Martin pondered the question.

"That's curious as well. I suggested we back off the CM, not because I was afraid of Stanfield reducing this to a racial issue, but because I sincerely believed the CM to be not involved. The AG argued just the

andy Rice

opposite, saying ~~suggesting that~~ if we keep ~~the~~ pressure on the CM, he in turn will ~~would~~ keep ~~the~~ pressure on the party apparatus which ~~so~~ their boat ~~would~~ springs a leak."

"You mean perhaps by standing on the CM's foot he would route-out the real guilty party?"

"Perhaps. Or we'll be handed a sacrifice, some poor underling whom the party somehow convinces to take the blame for this..."

"And leave the really guilty party, or parties, to escape the charges?"

"Exactly. All of this is worrying. But more concerning ~~troublesome~~ ~~worrying~~ is the liklihood that if I don't nip this now, we might end up with a chain of fires here. This could be just the beginning of a siege!"

"Martin?"

He turned to face her across the pillows.

"Yes?"

"I understand the weather in the south of England tomorrow is beautiful!"

-30- end chapter 28

"What Have we here?"

I found this where Fore Stats Curtains, yes?"

"curtains, yes!"

why they not burnt — I not understand"

They just fire when Fathers?"

Just the Areas

Pick up this have only one Hemorrhages

Referred to a piece of Charge fused /

"This is a piece of Charge I found along the bank [illegible] artillery wagon [illegible] observe! —

"The surface of these pieces flash burned, as if there have been some brief heat. The interior fibers are so soaked with heavy oil, they never reached combustion temperature."